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# WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN

*The Evangelistic Message in Outline*

BY

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TO MY WIFE

ETCV

# PREFACE

The pages that follow, prepared at the request of the Congregational Commission on Evangelism, present the gist of what has been worked out in many class-room discussions, open forums and personal conversations. Whatever value the presentation may have is largely due to the fact that it has been produced through intimate contact during many years with the actual needs and questionings of men and women looking for light on the problems of religious life. This experience has led to a realization of the very great evangelistic values of the point of view represented in these discussions. Those accustomed to a different point of view may nevertheless perhaps find in these pages suggestions useful to them in the presentation of religious experience from their own angle of approach. In these days of peculiar tumult in life and thought we may well be ready to gather from every quarter whatever may prove to have constructive value in building up that faith in God, in Jesus Christ, in the latent possibilities of good in all men, without which civilization cannot longer develop.

A much more extensive treatment of the subjects discussed might easily have been given but the purpose of the Commission seems better accomplished by compact statements. Some phases of religious life and thought

are not discussed at all. Those have been selected upon which it seems most desirable to concentrate the attention of persons who are being urged to begin the Christian way of living, to begin to pray and work and sacrifice in hope, to begin to feel out for the guidance of the living Lord as he leads on in the development of a race of men wise, powerful, honest and friendly.

Edward I. Bosworth.

Oberlin, Ohio,
September 7, 1922.

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# What It Means to be a Christian

## Chapter I

## THE WONDERFUL WAY OF LIVING

The purpose of this book is to stimulate thought on two questions:

How shall we tell a man what it means to become a Christian?

Why should a man become a Christian?

The book must be brief. Its statements may, therefore, sometimes seem dogmatic, but they are always meant to stir the mind of the reader to produce something better than the book. In these statements the use of the technical terms of theology will be avoided as much as possible. They mean quite different things to different "schools of theological thought," and their introduction into popular discussion would be confusing rather than enlightening. Anyone who has attempted to talk to a street full of people or to a factory group at the noon hour knows that he cannot ordinarily use such terms as "regeneration," "justification," "sanctification," "the Kingdom of God," to good effect. He must express the meaning of these words in the homely vernacular of those whom he wishes to influence.

In trying to tell a man what it is to become a Christian it is often necessary to study the man. Whiting Williams says that a man is like an island. If you wish to land valuable goods on an island it may be necessary to row all around it to find the best landing place. So, if an idea

is to be delivered to a man, it may be necessary to look carefully all around his life for the best place to land it.

But no matter who the man is, four general statements may be made at the start about what it is to become a Christian. The amplification of these statements will run through the book:

1. To become a Christian is to begin a certain wonderful way of living that men will be glad to continue always, even into the far ages.

2. In this way of living there is a glad and growing awareness of working with the unseen energy that we call the will of God to create a good world — a good world here and now and, after the incident of death, a good super-world called heaven.

3. Such a good world is one in which all kinds of men work well together; that is, do all kinds of work with a common end in view and an invincible good-will in their hearts. It is a growing power to work in sincerity and friendliness with all other men.

4. It is a life which utilizes all the incentives to such work that God has been pouring, and still is pouring, into the life of man through the personality of Jesus Christ. For this reason it is called the Christian life.

### *What do we mean by the will of God?*

Our idea of *will* is gained from knowledge of our own wills. A man's will is the intelligent set of his personality toward a goal, the determined push of his personality on its environment. The will of God is the intelligent set of a Vast Mind Energy toward a goal.

### *What is the goal of the will of God?*

The goal of the will of God may be ascertained in two ways: First, by looking back over the long evolution of

life to see what are the central trends that have actually been produced by the will of God; and second, by discovering the great passions of Jesus Christ in whose personality the central trends of the normal evolution of man seem to have gained wonderful expression in terms of human life. The result in each case is the same. The goal is seen to be a race of men, honest, friendly, and powerful, working together with God to carry life forward everywhere in the universe. The vast Mind Energy that we call God has been always feeling, thinking, willing to produce such a race of men. God's *wanting men* has been and is the force that vitalizes and directs evolution. This Mind Energy so acting has been God loving low forms of life up into man-life, and loving man-life up into the far reaches of a "fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," [1] — loving man up from the cave man to the Christ man. It is this power that has kept the generations of men going on and has bound their thoughts and actions into a degree of unity that makes progress and history possible. It is this power that fills the mind of man with brightening ideals of democracy, liberty, peace, with keen sense of humor, and with the hope of mastering all the powers of nature for the good of mankind.

This vast Mind Energy, the will of God, is near enough to us to give us being and keep it going, yet distinct enough from us to give us a chance to be ourselves, and so to permit the interplay of feeling and interchange of thought essential to religion. The nature of this close connection is a part of the unsolved mystery of personality.

The energy of the will of God is always rising in every man's soul to make him an honest, friendly, powerful man. These great basic qualities are necessarily the product of

[1] Ephesians 4 : 13.

time and the long discipline of life. How much is involved, for instance, in honesty! It means the determination to see all the facts, however uncongenial they may be; to report exactly what is seen; and to adjust properly all one's life to these facts at any cost. We ought rather to say, therefore, that the will of God is always rising within a man to make him a man of growing honesty, friendliness, and power.

Furthermore the will of God is always rising in him to summon him to work with it in the creative evolution of an honest, friendly, powerful world, a world civilization all of whose laws, customs, and institutions shall be in accord with these fundamental qualities of life. This developing civilization overflows through the phenomenon of death into a larger world at present unseen by us.

This wonderful way of living is " eternal life " or " eternal living." It is following out trends along which it will find food for itself, grow better and stronger eternally. " This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." [2]

[2] John 17 : 3.

## Chapter II

# BECOMING AWARE OF GOD

The fundamental feature of the wonderful way of living has just been said to be a glad and growing awareness of working together with the unseen energy called the will of God for the continuous creation of a good world here and now, and, after the incident of death, a heavenly superworld.

*How shall we make God real to men?*

How, then, shall we help multitudes of men and women, only normally mystical, to understand what we mean by God? There are multitudes of men, and women, and children, in country, village, and city, filling the streets, factories, railway trains, stores, offices, and movies, who are never touched by evangelism of any kind. How can God be presented to them so that they will see how to feel after him and how it feels to find him — what the feel of God is?

### 1. *By counting on normal mysticism*

Man's nature is adapted to the discovery of God. The spirit of man needs the Spirit of God. It is possible to count on a degree of mysticism in the normal man. Mysticism in its ordinary, normal form is a rational desire to have to do with the unseen. All men live more or less in the unseen; they are thinking about the unseen past, about the unseen future, about persons or things of the present temporarily out of sight. In the common activities of modern life men are being accustomed to the idea

of working with powerful unseen force for the common good. In this way the motorman and his passengers ride through city and country; cities are lighted and factory wheels begin to turn in the twinkling of an eye. Men more and more are coming to understand that there are unseen potencies of life and death in the microbes within and all about their bodies. It is a mistake not to count upon a sane, wholesome mysticism in trying to make men aware of God.

2. *By beginning with unrecognized religion*

All men have some unrecognized experience of God. It is inconceivable that so vast a being as God should for years have been close to the life of a man and yet have produced absolutely no result there. Even men who think themselves irreligious have some unrecognized religion. We should naturally expect this to be some simple and universal experience. The place to begin is at these points where God is making some impression on their lives. If an ignorant man from the African interior has come into the midst of all the electrical appliances of the Johannesburg mines, the best way to make him aware of the electricity in the atmosphere that has been all about him all his life is to call his attention to some familiar electrical phenomenon which he has never known by that name, rather than at once to try to have him learn to read a more or less difficult text-book on electricity. The multitudes of men and women who crowd the streets, the factories, the movies, the stores, the offices, the railway trains, need to be led to recognize the feel of God in certain familiar commonplace experiences not hitherto thought of as religious, rather than to be asked to read some more or less doctrinal, metaphysical, or devotional books, even including the Bible in many cases.

*Where should they look for the feel of God?*

Evidently to the highest and best experiences they have already known. In various forms these will be essentially two: The first is *the satisfaction produced by having done honest successful work.* The merchant feels it as he looks back upon the thirty years in which he has built up an honorable business in the village. It is a satisfaction beyond that which his bank account gives him. The farmer who took wild land forty years ago and has brought it under cultivation by the processes of scientific farming has the same feeling. So does the author of a book recording the result of painstaking research, even though his author's royalties may not pay for having its copy typewritten! So does an artist, or a physician, or a mother running a happy hygienic home. When Stanley came out from the interior of Africa after a successful expedition, and sat down in Cairo to write out his report, he said: "No honor or reward however great can be equal to that subtle satisfaction that a man feels when he can point to his work and say, 'See, now, the task which I promised you to perform with all loyalty and honesty, with might and main, to the utmost of my ability and God willing, is today finished. Say is it well and truly done?' And when the employer shall confess that it is well and truly done, can there be any recompense higher than that of one's inward self?" The other highest experience in human life is the *satisfaction found in friendships* — friendships with wife and children, brothers, sisters, and parents, with the other friends and neighbors with whom we laugh heartily and sorrow sincerely. Everyone has at least the imperfect beginnings of friendship with some one. There is some one whose society he would prefer to utter and permanent loneliness.

Now if we are to make God real to men we must begin

with these real though unrecognized rudimentary experiences of his presence and lead out from them into larger and conscious acquaintance with him. If God is thought of as somewhere else than in these great basic experiences of life, he is made to seem unreal and is likely to be missed altogether. The satisfaction found in ordinary social cooperation may be made to lead naturally out into conscious recognition of the energy of God pushing up into the lives of men to secure such cooperation on a world scale. When the will of God is seen to be the Energy urging men on to make great inventions for the good of men, to paint great pictures for the ennobling of men's purposes, to develop mines for the common welfare, to devise better and fairer ways of doing business, to think out finer philosophies of life, then the joy which men feel in such activities will be recognized as the beginning of the discovery of God. It will lead on into triumphant conscious acquaintance with him. Men will consciously join him in the Great Enterprise of establishing on the earth a race of men, powerful, honest, friendly; they will look forward naturally, as the greatness of God grows upon them, to maintaining such a civilization in a superworld after the incident of death is past.

This is what Jesus called *having "faith in God."* Faith is the reaching out of the whole personality to work together with the unseen energy of God in good will and at any cost for the common good. God answers back to such faith. Jesus apparently had the same thing in mind when he said that the pure in heart would see God. The heart is the center of personal life. A broken-hearted man is a man whose life has broken down at the center. The heart is " the hot spot in consciousness," the central point at which a man takes up his life and sets it decisively in a certain direction. A pure heart is an unadulterated cen-

tral purpose, a clean dominant ambition, a deep resolve to work with God for the common good at any cost.

3. *By helping them feel after God in definite acts*

What has been said so far about utilizing men's normal mysticism and beginning with their unrecognized religion might issue in a somewhat vague frame of mind, extremely vital and valuable, but lacking the concentration of experience into definite acts at a given time that has so much to contribute to the development of a habitual awareness of God. There are three specific actions which in many cases mark the conscious beginning of an awareness of God:

Beginning to pray.
Dropping a grudge or righting a wrong.
Taking up a neglected duty.

(1) *Beginning to pray*

How shall we get men to praying? How shall we present praying to men of only ordinary mysticism in such a way that it shall be more to them than merely "saying prayers" or talking to themselves, and really lead to a greater habitual awareness of God?

The nature and scope of prayer will be discussed in a later chapter, but here it may be said that praying to God is a definite reaching out to have consciously to do with God in the sphere of feeling and thought. If this is to be a real experience it must be closely knit up with those very real human relations, in friendship and work, that constitute the warp and woof of life. It must issue normally in some form of action that has reference to another man. This must be so because God is a Vast Mind Energy setting itself close up to every man and bent on getting from every man cooperation in producing an honest and

friendly world. Most men will never find prayer to be a real contact with God until they pray with expectation that through prayer something good from God is going to pass through them to another man. This is well illustrated by the experience of an influential Association Secretary in helping a member of his Bible class to become aware of God:

"He said he used to pray regularly but really never got any help from it and had given it up. . . . After some conversation about ideals of life, I was convinced that he lacked one thing — a great unifying principle in his life. I did not argue with him about belief in God. I asked him if he would take the Golden Rule for his ideal for a week and live up to it. He promised to do so, and also promised to come to see me at the end of the week.

"He came back at the appointed time and in response to my inquiry as to how the week had gone, said, 'Not very well. No one can live up to an ideal. I have tried the best I know and I cannot do it.' I asked him if he really *wanted* to succeed and on his replying that he did, I suggested that he ask God's help in the matter. He said, 'It is no use; I do not believe in God.' But, said I, you are failing with your present plan. You feel you are not satisfied. Something tells you there is something better than you have yet reached, and yet you are unable to attain it. Let me suggest something to you. Before you retire tonight sit down alone and say something like this, 'O God, I have tried for a week to do by others as I would like them to do by me and every day I have failed. I want to live up to that ideal and to be all that I know I ought to be. If there is any power that can help me I want it.' Then go to bed and sleep, if you can. In the morning just before you go down to breakfast, stop for a minute and say, 'O God, I am going out to another day's

work. I made a failure yesterday. I want to do better today. I want to be kind to the other fellows in the office. I want to do by them as I would like to have them do by me. Help me today.' Get your breakfast and go to work. I asked him if he would do that. He said 'I will try.' I urged him to give it a fair trial, to try for a week faithfully and come in again.

"At the end of the week he came in and with a different expression on his face than I had seen any time before. In response to 'How has the week gone?' he replied, 'First rate. Now I know there is a God.' I asked him how he knew and he said, 'Because he has helped me this week to live the best week of my life.' I said, Are you sure about it? Maybe you are deceiving yourself. He said, 'No, I am not deceiving myself, I *know*. I have talked the matter over with God every morning and every evening and some power — I do not know what it is — has helped me succeed where before I failed, and I believe the power is God.'

"That was the beginning of the establishment in that young man's life of a confidence in God that no power has been able to shake. I have known him for several years and he has become a strong, active Christian." [1]

Prayer, then, is a means of becoming aware of God, and ordinary men will pray intelligently when they see that there is a place for prayer in those commonplace relations of life that mean most to them. God is in the very thick of life. Men live in the midst of God's life. Prayer is a kind of normal soul action that stirs both God and men. The experience to be aimed at is not to be "alone with God" in an isolation that never will appeal to the multitudes in the street and at the movies; they have a wholesome love of being with a lot of people, in pleasant social

[1] Farnsworth, "The Christian Appeal," pp. 4–6.

relations. There will come great emergencies in almost every life when a man may wish to be alone with God. Almost anyone may learn to like a few moments alone with God when he wakes up in the morning. Even then he will be thinking in prayer about the day's work into which he is about to enter, and the people he will meet. For the socially-minded multitudes the actual practice of prayer will largely be in the quick contacts and reactions of the day's busy life.

It is of utmost importance therefore to present praying to men in such a way as to make it seem an immediately feasible way to produce valuable results in the day's work. In this way a growing awareness of God in the work and friendships of daily life will be developed. God can be counted on to respond. Man does not do all the seeking.

(2) *Dropping a grudge or righting a wrong*

Jesus strongly emphasized the necessity of dropping a grudge if one would become aware of God: "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one." [2] It is necessary not only to drop a grudge but to right any wrong. Jesus drew a vivid picture of a man who had reached the altar in the temple ready to offer a gift to God. He had perhaps made an expensive journey by land and sea to bring his gift to Jerusalem. As he stood with the priest by the altar he remembered that a neighbor had been injured by him. Jesus said that it was useless to proceed with the sacrificial gift. He must leave it with the priest, go back home and right things with his neighbor. Then he might return to present his offering. "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way;

[2] Mark 11 : 25.

first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." [3]

A little probing often reveals bitterness in the heart, a great wrong which it seems impossible to forgive, a spirit of envy or dislike of some one which makes his success a source of discomfort and his failure an unconfessed satisfaction. When this has been laid before God, generally in private prayer, not in general terms but with specific mention of the individual's name, an awareness of God breaks out in the soul. This is entirely natural. It is necessary to agree with God in his feeling about an individual who has done wrong or suffered a wrong, in order to have any peaceful awareness of his presence. It is impossible to work with God for a friendly world so long as there is an unfriendly state of heart.

(3) *Taking up a neglected duty*

Sometimes awareness of God begins where opposition to his will at some definite point other than dropping a grudge ceases. It is more or less clearly recognized that an alteration must be made in the way of living. Some unwelcome occupation must be taken up. A life work which involves hardship must be chosen. Some heavy obligation must be assumed. At certain definite points the will of God is pushing an individual forward so subtly as to give opportunity for the individual initiative requisite for character. When opposition to the will of God gives way, the sense of the presence of God may be very marked. In the new joy of carrying life forward with God, the person realizes that every sense of duty is an opportunity for the enlargement of life.

In going around the circumference of a man's life to see where the idea of feeling after God may best be brought

[3] Matthew 5 : 23—24.

home to him, regard must be had for his temperament. The mystical element is more highly developed in some temperaments. Such persons are ready immediately to pray and find their most distinct response from God in prayer. Others are most naturally interested in practical attempts to improve conditions in individual or community life. In various forms of philanthropy that absorb their attention they find a growing awareness of God. They get acquainted with him by working with him. Men of another temperament find God becoming real to them when some obscurity in thought is cleared away. Their lives seem to halt at the point where an intellectual difficulty confronts them. As soon as this is removed they go forward with satisfaction in the way of life. This is especially true of those who have been accustomed to think of religion as strictly identified with certain "doctrines" which they have either resented or not understood.

*What ought a man to consider as evidence that he is becoming aware of God?*

A man's awareness of the pure air that he has long been unconsciously drawing in with every breath sometimes comes to him only after pain and struggle. When he has been nearly killed by escaping gas in a close room, or when he has suffered from asthma, he appreciates the easy breathing of pure air. So when a man through struggle with a fierce temptation, through sorrow, or through threatened failure in some important undertaking, recognizes his need of God, the awareness of God's steady presence with him makes life a new thing. A man may sometimes learn to appreciate deep breathing of pure air by simply having his attention called to its effect upon him, without having the painful experiences just men-

tioned. So a man may have a growing awareness of God's presence without painful experience preceding it.

A man does not help himself by *striving* to enjoy pure air or by *striving* to feel God. The best evidence of contact with either is healthful life. Healthful life in the sphere of man's higher nature means a growing sincerity, a strengthening friendliness, and a consequently deepening peace in all the experiences of a busy daily life. This deepening peace, or sense of normality, is a natural consequence of a growing sincerity and friendliness. Trying to appear to be what one is not and maintaining a grouch or a grudge involve a nervous strain and a rasping friction that make peace impossible.

## Chapter III

# IS THERE A GOD?

It might seem as if the proof of God's existence should have been the subject of the preceding chapter. It would seem logical to inquire whether there is a God before asking how to become aware of him. But most people have no doubt about the existence of God. So soon as a really thinkable idea of God in terms of real life is presented to them, they accept it as a matter of course. The only problem for them is how to become aware of God.

There are some, however, who either do not, or think they do not, believe in the existence of God.

### *Can the existence of God be proved?*

The possibility of proving God's existence depends upon what we mean by "proved." In a sense the existence of God, like any other fundamental reality, must be *discovered* not "proved." The existence of God can no more be proved by abstract reasoning apart from human experience than can the existence of oxygen. Both are forms of energy that must be discovered by some one capable of having experience of their presence. This experience when reported by those who have had it may, of course, furnish data, which will be used by others in a process of reasoning.

> "Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son;
> Thou canst not prove the world thou movest in;
> Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
> Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone;

Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one.
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal — no,
Nor yet that thou art mortal — nay, my son;
Thou canst not prove that I who speak with thee
Am not thyself in converse with thyself;
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven; wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt."

A man, then, may not look for conclusive proof at the start that there is a God. He must feel after him and find him. The justification for a situation in which a man must find out for himself whether there is a God is the fact that the resolve and effort to search for him constitute a valuable character-making process. Furthermore, since God as conceived by Christianity is so powerful a force, if he were to thrust his presence upon us in immediate absolute demonstration we should be overwhelmed by it and not have sufficient opportunity for initiative left to make character possible.

*How much evidence is necessary to make it reasonable to begin to feel after God?*

God as conceived by the Christian religion is so great a value that evidence sufficient to create only a probability, or even a possibility, of his existence, would impose upon all right-minded men an unescapable obligation to try to discover him. If the father of a lost child hears a vague rumor that a lost child has been found in a neighboring city, he does not wait for proof before he takes a trip to the city. A child is of such value to a true father that the father is ready to act in such a case on evidence that creates only a remote possibility. So a Christlike God is of such value to a true man that a true man is ready to search vigorously and thoroughly, acting upon what is only a clue.

In scientific research a man does not wait for proof before he institutes a series of painstaking experiments. He takes the best clue he has, however slight, and lets it guide him in a search for experience through experiment. The truly scientific spirit does not content itself with criticising its best clues. On the contrary it works its best clues hard.

What then are the clues that make the existence of such a God as was described in the preceding chapter seem possible enough to warrant a great adventure in feeling after him? What is the evidence that makes the existence of God seem probable or possible?

*Evidence making the existence of God probable*

In the *first* place, modern thought tends to the conclusion that behind all the phenomena of nature and human life there is one energy, unifying all things though manifesting itself in very different forms. Where shall we look for a clue as to the nature of this energy? Apparently we must *infer it from the character of the highest phenomenon in which it expresses itself, namely, human personality of the highest type.* This type appears in good and capable men, in good men able to bring things to pass. Whatever else this unifying energy may be, it must involve good will working to a purposed end. We are able to take the best specimen of personality that the human race affords, the historical personality of Jesus, and say, "Here is at least our best clue to the nature of ultimate energy, to the nature of God."

In objection to this view it might be urged that, since there are so many bad personalities among the highest class of phenomena, they too must be allowed to shape our view of the force behind all things. However, a study of the nature of man shows that man was meant to be

good, for if he is good — if he exercises good-will — his personality experiences a high and harmonious development. On the other hand, when he is bad, he is evidently acting against the laws of his being; his personality becomes confused and ultimately suffers wreck. So we may still say that it is man, evidently meant by the very nature of his being to be good and capable, that gives us our best clue to the nature of the one force behind all things.

Another possible objection to this view is found in the fact that since there is such a diversity of phenomena in which this one force has expressed itself, we ought to find our clue in the sum total of phenomena, high and low, rather than in capable good men. However, we find that these miscellaneous phenomena are gathered up in one evolutionary process that issues in the capable good man as its highest known product up to date.

A further objection is this. If we should find ourselves necessitated by weight of evidence, which has not yet appeared, to believe that man, in all phases of his being consists of chemical reactions, of highly organized matter, could we continue to hold the working idea of God, presented in the preceding chapter? It would seem that we could. The case would be this. A man, consisting of chemical reactions or whatever else the behaviorist psychologist may suppose, is a being capable of thinking and loving, capable of turning back upon his past and discovering the evolutionary theory, capable of conceiving vast plans for the improvement of the race through the manipulation of an evolutionary process, capable of finding out how far off the stars are, what they are made of, and where they will be a million years from now. Man, a being made up of chemical reactions, can do all this. According to the Christian idea man and God are the same kind of being; God is a father and men are his sons.

The Christian working idea of God conceives him to be doing the *same kind* of things that men do: thinking, feeling, willing, loving, working to an end. Therefore, even though God, as well as men, were finally conceived to be made up of chemical reactions he could be conceived to be doing all these things, because we know that men actually do them. The question of ultimate interest when one starts upon this line of inquiry is regarding the nature of the atom, or of its mysterious nucleus.

A *second* evidence of the existence of a Vast Mind Energy working with unabating good will toward a worthy end is found in the *indications of design in the universe.* Darwin was at times greatly moved by this consideration: "Another source of conviction in the existence of God connected with the reason and not with the feelings impresses me as having much more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty, or rather impossibility of conceiving of this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity. When thus reflecting I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a Theist. This conclusion was strong in my mind about the time, as far as I can remember, when I wrote the 'Origin of Species,' and it is since that time that it has very gradually, with many fluctuations, become weaker." [1]

There are cases where no adaptation of means to any worthy end appears, and these may somewhat lessen the force of the argument, but they do not destroy it. On the whole the universe reveals orderly processes working out worthy results, and not an irrational chaos. Particu-

[1] "Life and Letters of Charles Darwin," Volume I, p. 282.

larly if we hold in some form a theory of evolution do we feel the need of positing a designing Mind Energy, for the evolutionary process is itself the most wonderful exhibition of apparent ingenuity known to the human mind. Furthermore we are finding out that it is susceptible to the manipulation of personal will; men are able to use the process to accomplish remarkable results.

A *third* consideration making the existence of God a probability is *man's need of God and capacity for reaching out to work with him.*

There is in man's nature an elemental outcry for two things: (1) unity, in itself and in all the universe about it; and (2) sympathy. The instinctive desire for unity in the universe is the persistent incentive to scientific investigation. The instinctive and more wide-spread desire to find sympathy is at the basis of religion. This cry for unity and sympathy is essentially the cry for God. It is not meant that every individual is conscious of the need of God and of capacity for reaching out to him, any more than that every man is conscious of capacity to recognize the beautiful. But men in general in all ages give undeniable evidence of this need and capacity.

The argument is this: In all the evolution of life, as John Fiske has pointed out, wherever there has developed in any organism a deep need of, and capacity for working with, something outside itself, the environment has furnished that something. Evolution has been possible because this has been so. This creates a strong presumption that, since man, the highest product of this evolution, appears with a deep-seated need of and capacity for such a being as God, there is some such being. "To suppose that during countless ages, from the seaweed up to Man, the progress of life was achieved through adjustments to external realities, but that then the method was all at

once changed and throughout a vast province of evolution the end was secured through adjustments to external non-realities, is to do sheer violence to logic and to common sense. . . . All the analogies of nature fairly shout against the assumption of such a breach of continuity between the evolution of Man and all previous evolution. . . . The lesson of evolution is that through all these weary ages the Human Soul has not been cherishing in Religion a delusive phantom, but in spite of seemingly endless groping and stumbling it has been rising to the recognition of its essential kinship with the ever-living God. Of all the implications of the doctrine of evolution with regard to Man, I believe the very deepest and strongest to be that which asserts the Everlasting Reality of Religion." [1]

It is sometimes said that, because the religious instinct can be traced back to crude superstition in the early stages of human development, it is therefore discredited and cannot be properly regarded as furnishing evidence for the existence of the being it reaches out to find. But it is equally true, that modern science can be traced back to crude superstition, and this does not shake our belief in the reality of the forces with which scientific investigators seek to become acquainted. In all development of the race from lower to higher, the lower will necessarily seem crude and superstitious when afterward viewed from the standpoint of the higher.

A *fourth* consideration making the existence of God a probability is *the experience of many men of large intelligence in many centuries.* They have not merely reached out instinctively to find God, as was pointed out in the last paragraph. They have reported an experience that seems best explained upon the theory that it has resulted

[1] John Fiske, "Through Nature to God," pp. 189–91.

from contact with an unseen Mind Energy so much higher and holier than themselves as to be properly called God.

The best and most complete literary record of such experience is found in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, and preeminently in the report of Jesus Christ's personal experience with God.

Any one of these four lines of evidence creates such reasonable probability or possibility of the existence of God as lays upon men an absolute obligation to undertake the search for him. The Christian God is a possible value too great and high to be ignored by any right-minded man.

It is of course recognized in all this discussion that the real nature of God's relation to his universe of personal and impersonal being is at present an unsolved mystery. The same sort of mystery confronts us when we try to understand the way in which our own mind energy operates on its own body and the environing world. It is not a mystery which prevents our reaching out to have contact with other mind energy in either God or our fellow men, or with the forces that are present in our bodies and their physical environment. We love and work with our friends, dig our coal and work our farms, without being troubled by the unsolved mysteries connected with these operations.

It is also recognzied that no one would rest the whole case for the existence of God solely on the immediate outcome of his own personal experiment. He would not feel that his own failure to secure at once a satisfactory experience in finding God proved conclusively that there is no God. He would always take into account the experience of others. No one seeking acquaintance with an unseen physical force through a series of experiments in his laboratory would consider his own failure in a particular experiment to be final and conclusive. He would take

into account the experience gained by experimenters in other reputable laboratories.

*Does the fact of human suffering forbid the supposition that there is a good God?*

The prevalence of human suffering seems to many persons inconsistent with the idea of a good God, or at least it introduces a paralyzing suspicion that lessens eager persistence in feeling after him. This is especially true just now when the terrible experiences of the great war are fresh in our minds. It is felt that a being who could not prevent such suffering would be too weak to be called God, and a being who could but would not, would be too wicked to be called God. The full dimensions of the difficulty need to be faced. The suffering occasioned by the great war is impressive because of its dramatic character rather than because of any peculiar intensity or numbers involved. It is said that during the nineteen months of America's participation in the war twice as many Americans were killed by automobile accidents alone as were killed in the war. The sorrow of surviving friends in the former case was just as great as in the latter. Probably it would be possible to go over the earth at any time and gather several groups as large as the whole Armenian group, each of which would be suffering as keenly as that tragic group has suffered. That is, human suffering, often in extreme forms, has been wrought into the very warp and woof of life century after century. The realization of this fact makes some feel that the kindest thing we can say about the whole human situation is that there is no great directing intelligence surrounding human life. In meeting this difficulty it is necessary first of all to consider the nature of human suffering.

*What is human suffering?*

It is not easy to define human suffering, because it is a personal experience and personality is an unsolved mystery. We recognize at once that personality is a complex unit and that suffering is only one element in a complex experience. When a college boy is on the last lap of the mile run, apparently in physical agony, his throat aching, his legs heavy, and the ground rising up to meet him, but sure that he is winning the race and will by winning add points enough to the score to win the intercollegiate track meet for his college, is he suffering or is he happy? We cannot understand the boy's condition if we concentrate attention exclusively upon the single item of his distress. The same thing is true of civilization as a whole. If an inhabitant of Mars should spend a week on the earth inspecting its civilization and should, in his passage from city to city and village to village, inspect only the spots where animals are slaughtered for the market, he would get a very distorted view of the earth's civilization. If he should see no homes, libraries, churches, schools, hospitals, parks and baseball games, but only slaughter houses, he would carry back to Mars an utterly misleading report of human life on the earth.

*Human suffering makes a vital contribution to human progress*

If we look back along the whole course of the evolutionary process, we see that suffering has been not simply an incidental feature of a complex process but an essential characteristic of God's way of producing a race of powerful, honest, and friendly men. The process, including suffering as one of its essential elements, has actually had this result. Mankind has grown stronger and better by

means of it. Life has emerged from the animal stage and entered the human stage; the primitive man-animal has become the Christian friend.

It is not hard to see, in part at least, how suffering has made a vital contribution to this result. Whenever any evil causes suffering enough, men will discover and remove its cause. Famine drives men to dam the Nile, to devise systems of irrigation and new methods of cultivation, to invent means of swift transportation. When men have suffered enough from dreadful diseases they will discover and remove the causes of them. When they have suffered enough from poverty they will discover and remove its causes. When they have suffered enough from war they will discover and remove its causes. The experience of mankind with suffering is begetting in them a sublime confidence that they can in the course of time discover and remove the causes of all the known evils which make men suffer. They even dare to believe that they can eliminate the prime and prolific cause of the worst forms of suffering known to man, namely, the evil will of man. One Jesus Christ has appeared on earth confident that he can lead men on to this great achievement, and establish upon the earth a race of men powerful, honest, and friendly. It is in connection with this movement that the value of what appears to be the most outrageous form of suffering appears most clearly, the suffering inflicted on the innocent by the evil will of the brutally selfish. Such suffering we have learned, for reasons that will appear in another connection, to call " redemptive," or emancipating.

### *God shares human suffering*

There is one further idea connected with suffering in its relation to the idea of God. Man's enlarging idea of God has more and more necessitated the conviction that God

shares human suffering. The Christian conception of the evolutionary process regards the life of God as most intimately involved in it. The suffering that has characterized the process all the way along must have involved God. Furthermore, calling God "our Father" necessarily involves attributing suffering to him. He is no true father who does not share the suffering of his children.

Suffering, then, constitutes no reason for doubting the existence close at hand of a good God. A being powerful enough to bring life up from low forms to highly developed men is powerful enough to be called God. A being good enough to suffer with advancing life and with all the woes of his human children is good enough to be called God.

As was said above, suffering is only one element in complex personal life, whether that life be the life of God or of man. The fountains of laughter and tears are near together in the life of both God and man. What may take the place of suffering as an incentive to progress in more advanced stages of evolution we do not know. The bearing of personal immortality on the question is to be considered later. Under present conditions suffering seems indispensable, something to be borne bravely when it comes and even with victorious consciousness of helping to carry life forward.

The late Dr. Frank T. Bayley once gave me the following lines, said to have been found on the wall of a room in a hospital:

"The cry of man's anguish went up to God,
Lord, take away pain!
The Shadow that darkens the world Thou hast made;
The close coiling chain
That strangles the heart; the burden that weighs
On the wings that should soar —
Lord, take away pain from the world Thou hast made
That it love Thee the more!

"Then answered the Lord to the cry of the world,
Shall I take away pain,
And with it the power of the soul to endure,
Made strong by the strain?
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart
And sacrifice high?
Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire
White brows to the sky?
Shall I take away love that redeems with a price
And smiles at its loss?
Can ye spare from your lives that would cling unto mine
The Christ on his cross?"

## Chapter IV

# CHRISTIAN PRAYER

Prayer as a definite act calculated to secure the beginning of an awareness of God has already been considered (p. 9). But because prayer is an activity central in all the development of the Christian's wonderful way of living it properly comes up for further discussion here.

It is central in the Christian way of living because it brings the spirit of a man face to face with the idea of God as a present living reality and is a distinct effort to act in accordance with that idea. It is conscious outreach in reverent thought and feeling to God, expecting a response. It is perhaps not so much a reaching *out* as it is a reaching *in* to the depths of the soul, for it is in those depths, in the very heart of a man, that the energy of God touches him most vitally.

It follows from this that prayer is by no means exclusively an effort to get something from God. The best moments of a son with his father are not necessarily those in which the son is asking his father for something. They are often those restful moments in which there is a free interplay of feeling and interchange of thought, a thinking and feeling back and forth. In such moments the praying soul of a man is storing up life energy that will be let out later in high purpose and its unflinching execution.

It is conceivable that such an experience might come to seem mere soliloquy, a communing of the soul with itself, a kind of spiritual gymnastics that makes for health but that does not involve the intelligent action of any energy other than that of the soul itself. If a man should reach

the conviction that such is the case, his activity would be simply thinking and not praying. There may be a certain broad sense in which all thinking is a kind of unconscious praying, but it is not what the Christian means by praying. The Christian feels that he is having to do with a responsive Mind Energy, with a heavenly Father to whom one may come on occasion with an asking and from whom there will be a getting. When a man prays to the vast all-enfolding Other that we call God, that Other is conceived to be stirred and to give out consciously something that would not otherwise be given out. There doubtless is the permanent disposition to be giving out whatever is needed, but the giving out does not occur until the particular need arises and the heart opens in prayer to receive. This implies that God gives attention to each one of countless individuals.

*Does God give attention to details?*

The universe is so vast and the individuals in it are so many that it is hard to think of the mind of God being able to give attention to the details of each individual's life.

> "As the poor earth's pale history runs,
> What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million, million suns."

God may be good so far as he goes, but can he go so far in capacity for attention as to reach each individual in all the details of life? Modern science shows that the force behind all phenomena is expressing itself with the most careful precision in the world of the minute. The atom itself is made up of particles which move in "intricate but ascertainable orbits," so that we have the new science of atomic astronomy.[1] It is not unthinkable that a power

[1] Oliver Lodge, "Substance of Faith," p. 49.

that can so express itself in an individual atom should attend to the wonderful individual man, who looks into the atom and begins to understand its astronomy. It is evident that the great force shaping human civilization does actually produce more and more concern for the individual. The individual child, the individual poor and sick and blind, the individual everywhere is being more and more carefully conserved.

If there is to be a getting from God in response to an asking, the asking must be for what God has and is. God has in his very nature resources to be used in the evolution of a friendly world. Therefore the asking must be for something to be used in a friendly way, for something that can be directly or indirectly shared with another.

*Prayer getting something from God to share with another*

Jesus emphasized this in his clearest teaching about what actually happens when a man prays and receives answer. When Jesus was asked to teach his disciples to pray he drew a picture of ordinary neighborhood life in which prayer was reduced to its simplest terms. In this picture there were three persons: a well-to-do man with a plenty, a man in need, and a friendly go-between.[1] A man at midnight was awakened by a knocking at his door. Standing on the threshold in the darkness he found a friend, hungry and tired. He had no food for his unexpected guest. So he went to the house of a well-to-do neighbor with whom he was on very friendly terms and said to him: "Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine is come to me on a journey and I have nothing to set before him." After some rather humorous grumpy

[1] Luke 11 : 1–13.

objection, which Jesus introduced to give the incident a flavor of life and reality probably much enjoyed by his listeners, the sleepy friend got up and gave him " as many as he needed." The bread was taken home and shared with the hungry traveler. Jesus reported this as being a picture of what actually happens in prayer, taking pains only to add that if a sleepy neighbor could finally be prevailed upon to give what was asked, " how much more " would response be made by a heavenly Father whose door opens to everyone who knocks.

Two questions arise here whenever a man considers whether or not it is worth while to begin praying: What passes from the life of God through his praying friend to the man in need, and, how does it pass?

*How does anything pass from the life of God into the life of a praying man?*

It passes in accordance with the laws that describe the action of all mind energy, the laws in accordance with which all intercourse between the minds of men goes steadily on. Men are distinct from each other. Individuality is a fact. There seems to be a sort of gulf between individuals. But nevertheless physical, physiological, psychical forces are of such a nature as to facilitate orderly intercourse between individuals. The higher civilization becomes, the more direct and reliable this intercourse is. It is accomplished with a diminishing amount of intervening apparatus, and with increasing precision. The post gives way to the telegraph, and the telegraph to the wireless.

In accordance with physical laws men are expected to draw from their physical environment something to share with other men. The farmer and the miner, acting in accordance with the fixed laws of nature, get food and fuel

to share with other men. So, in accordance with the common psychic laws that describe the action of all Mind Energy, men in that species of human action called prayer get something from the great thinking, feeling, loving Mind Energy all about them to share with other men.

*What passes from the life of God into the life of a praying man?*

The two chief values known to man, namely, *feeling* and *thought*. By feeling is not meant a passing whim or mood but that fundamental element in personality that merges into will and warms the intellectual faculty with desire. The quality, intensity, and persistence of such feeling often determine whether life shall be a success or a failure. If a man has in sufficient degree the feeling of hope, courage, friendliness—the proper morale—he may be carried on to success. If he lack this feeling he will fail. When your friend comes to you in the midnight darkness of discouragement, tired and hungry in the long journey of life, what can you do for him? You can, on the spot without his knowing it, go down into the inner depths of your being with a simple prayer: "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him." Out of the vast underlying life of God feeling may rise within you and become a part of yourself, which you can share with him. He will go on his way, the crisis successfully past.

In the same way *thought* may pass from the mind of God through you to him. Success often depends upon having the right thought in an important juncture. If the physician or the business man, the farmer, the teacher, the mother in the home, gets the right idea at the critical time, there will be success, otherwise perhaps failure.

Your friend comes to you in great perplexity. He must decide upon his life work, or there is a desperate situation in the home which the mother does not know how to deal with, or business seems to be going on the rocks. What can you do to help? You can again, on the spot, secretly go down into the depths of your being and feel after the underlying Mind Energy of God: "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him." Then the right thought may come to you, become a part of yourself that you can share with your friend in need. He may in this way be sent on to years of usefulness in the world that is ever growing more near to God's desire.

It is from this point of view that the meaning of prayer "in Christ's name" and "for Christ's sake" becomes evident. Christ is committed with all the energy of his being to the production of a friendly race of men. All prayer, therefore, which connects itself with his name and sake will be necessarily for something to use in a friendly way. These expressions identify the person who prays with the dominant ambition of Christ. This is the distinctive characteristic of Christian prayer as contrasted with pagan prayer.

*Why did God not help the needy man directly?*

Why did God leave the lonely traveler to make his way to his friend's door and look for help there? Doubtless God had been helping directly. God had been his unseen companion in the midnight darkness all along the lonely way. But the man was not able to recognize this. He had not yet "found" God, or his sense of God was temporarily dim. Furthermore God seems to have ordained that help shall often pass from himself to a man in need through another man, in order that in this way brother-

hood may be built up in the world and men be bound together in a world unity. By sharing with each other what is drawn from our spiritual environment through prayer men are brought together in brotherhood and "bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

*Power in prayer a growth*

Since the man who prays Christian prayer is a man who, according to Jesus' teaching, stands between a great Friend-with-a-Plenty and a friend in need, it follows that he who would pray well must take pains to develop both friendships. He must do what he can to develop his friendly feeling toward God and toward men. He must cultivate friendly desire in both relationships. He must learn how to absorb from God and how to share tactfully with men. This takes time and thought and the discipline of experience. It takes time to understand the movements of God's will, to detect its subtle pressure on and in the human will. Especially it takes time to reach an intelligent understanding of, and strong tactful sympathy with, the real needs of those with whom we have to do. This comes often through finding ourselves the objects of another's prayerful sympathy. All the varied years of human life are calculated to develop enlarging capacity for praying. The long history of life in the earth shows that God has been wanting men to find out the laws of the physical and psychic world and to learn how to work with him in the use of physical and psychic force for the common good.

*The relation of "the laws of nature" to prayer*

To what extent do "the laws of nature" limit the scope of prayer? If we should include psychic law in the laws

of nature, it has become evident that in the sphere of psychic action these laws facilitate rather than limit the possibilities of answer to prayer. It is because of fixed psychic laws that feeling and thought pass from one mind to another, that men ask and get from each other, and ask and get from God in the sphere of thought and feeling. But does the law of cause and effect as it is seen outside the sphere of man's psychic life, in the natural world, prevent the answer to prayer in that sphere? Theoretically it is not inconceivable that God should directly operate on physical forces in answer to prayer. Man's experience with these forces teaches that they are exceedingly sensitive to the manipulation of a personal will. The more men learn about the forces of nature and the invariable laws of their action the more they are able to do, not in spite of, but because of, this invariability, in answering each other's calls for help.

Human experience seems to teach, however, that God does not often operate upon natural forces in answer to prayer. He has left them to constitute a fascinating field for human investigation and discovery. In this field, men, spurred on by great needs which are not directly met by answers to prayer, have achieved the discoveries and inventions that characterize modern civilization. No one could wish this to be otherwise. Such achievements constitute a large part of the glory and joy of living. In connection with all such effort there is chance enough for such prayer as could be answered by God's putting a thought into the mind of a man. Perhaps this has occurred many times in the long history of scientific research. New scientific hypotheses sometimes spring up in men's minds in strange ways. A man dying of thirst in the middle of a desert where it never rains would not think of asking God to make it rain, but he might ask God

to put into some man's mind the thought of going out into the desert on some errand with a supply of water.

*Does the theory of predestination or philosophic determinism preclude answer to prayer?*

It is perhaps sufficient to say that there is no more reason why the theories of predestination or philosophic determinism should stop requests made of God than that they should stop the requests that men are constantly making of each other. If either of these theories makes petition to God unreasonable it makes all petitions to men unreasonable. If on this ground it is unreasonable to ask God to guide us by affecting our thought and feeling, it is equally unreasonable on this ground, for a pupil to ask his teacher to make a suggestion that will guide him in his research work.

The whole subject of prayer clears up somewhat when we recognize that prayer is not an effort to bend God's will, to persuade God to do something that he would rather not do, but that it is the reverent opening of the heart and mind to such incoming of the feeling and thought of God as may be appropriate to the situation in which we find ourselves. There is need to take account, too, of human frailty and shortsightedness. Children ask their parents for many things that they do not get, and they get many things that they do not ask for. This does not warrant their concluding that it is useless ever to ask. Some things they get only when and because they ask. And they always have their parents' love, however much they may be wisely left to learn some things by painful experience. Prayer is no device for eliminating the necessity of learning some things by experience in living.

There is need to emphasize again the thought that while prayer is a reaching into the unseen, it is not the fading

away of that which is seen. It is not being mystically lost in God. It is not the surrender of individuality. On the contrary it would seem that true prayer develops at one and the same time a sense of God, of self, and of other men. Coming into the presence of God necessitates a clearer consciousness of men, for men are God's great concern. It gives a new significance to all life. Professor Walter Rauschenbusch gave beautiful expression to this thought:

"In the castle of my soul
Is a little postern gate,
Whereat, when I enter,
I am in the presence of God.
In a moment, in the turning of a thought,
I am where God is.
This is a fact."

"When I enter into God,
All life has a meaning.
Without asking I know;
My desires are even now fulfilled,
My fever is gone
In the great quiet of God.
My troubles are but pebbles on the road,
My joys are like the everlasting hills.
So it is when I step through the gate of prayer
From time into eternity.
When I am in the consciousness of God,
My fellow men are not far off and forgotten,
But close and strangely dear.
Those whom I love
Have a mystic value.
They shine as if a light were glowing within them."

"So it is when my soul steps through the postern gate
Into the presence of God.
Big things become small, and small things become great.
The near becomes far, and the future is near.
The lowly and despised is shot through with glory."

## Chapter V

# WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

The wonderful way of living that we call the Christian life is one which utilizes all the incentive that God pours into the experience of men through the personality of Jesus Christ. It is called the "Christian" life because of his connection with it. "Wherever Christianity has struck out a new path in her journey it has been because the personality of Jesus had again become living, and a ray from its being had once more illumined the world."[1] How shall we make Jesus Christ so real to the multitudes of men, women and children in country, village and city that they will feel his power and receive the tremendous moral incentive that God is pouring into the life of man through him? How shall we make people realize *who he is and what of it?*

It is unfortunate that the effort to do this has so generally made use of obscure metaphysical terms. Many people think of him as for some reason the center of ill-natured controversy about the "incarnation," the "atonement," the "trinity." Henry Drummond somewhere said that he came on into his university years before he saw that Jesus was more than a doctrinal convenience, a theological device for bringing an offended God and sinful men together. To many he is a name to curse by, a labor agitator, or simply a teacher of a more or less reliable ethic.

[1]Bousset, "What is Religion?" p. 237f.

*How do we tell who any one is?*

A stranger enters a room. How shall we find out who he is? We may learn his name. It is John Smith. We may learn that he is the son of old John Smith. If we know his father this may throw some light on who he is. But a son is often very different from his father. If we learn that this stranger's fundamental conviction is that he can paint a picture which will bless every person who looks at it, we know a great deal about him. But before we know him at all adequately it is necessary to know the answer to one other question, namely, Can he paint the picture? That is, in order to tell in any fundamental way who a person is we must know, first, his deepest feeling and desire, and second, the success with which he can express his deepest feeling and desire in action. We need to know what he thinks about himself and the corroboration which his thought about himself finds in what he shows himself able to do.

*What was Jesus' deepest feeling and desire?*

1. *First of all Jesus had a deep direct feeling of the Mind Energy which we call the will of God and a consuming unrelaxing desire to let it out in action.* He knew the "feel" of God. He had the supreme religious experience with the mighty will of God. *In this experience he so explored and adjusted himself to the will of God as to give it supreme expression in terms of human life and death.* We learn from a study of his life and teaching what the will of God did with him and would do with the life of every man and all mankind. Our problem is to make this religious experience of Jesus seem real to men and women of ordinary outlook and capacity. If this is to be done they must some way see themselves in the life of Jesus.

This means first of all that they must find in him what they recognize as high reality in their own best experience. They must realize that he *had to do with the same will of God with which they themselves are in daily contact.* The same will of God that rises in them to claim them for the honest and friendly life and for cooperation in producing an honest and friendly world, rose also in him for the same purpose.

They must feel in the second place that *Jesus' religious experience with the will of God was a growth,* as is ours, and as all real human experience must be. Like ourselves he faced uncertainties that called for moral adventure, for experiment as a means of attaining experience, conviction and character. Character for him, as for us, came by thinking and living his way through difficult problems, by going forward when he could not see far ahead, by feeling the tremendous pull of temptation and resisting it. Among the early Christians he was nearly lost in the sublimations of vague and complicated speculation, but this process was fortunately arrested by others who showed that he " was tempted in all points like as we are," and " learned obedience through the things that he suffered."

" Gospels " of a superior type survived many that were inferior and these better Gospels passed on to posterity the picture of one who had his growing *experience with the will of God in an ordinary neighborhood.* He lived in a home in which apparently it was necessary often to ask, What shall we eat, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? He was a business man, under the necessity of making fair bargains, pleasing critical customers, dunning delinquent debtors, employing more or less satisfactory workmen and working himself for more or less satisfactory employers. He mixed in the social life of the neighbor-

hood, its weddings and funerals, politics and gossip, made friends and enemies. Almost all of his life was spent and his character developed in the same plain daily life that we all live. His brief public life which ended in apparent public disgrace, presented a series of extraordinary crises, but even they were made up of the elements of the real human life that we all live.

2. Jesus' deepest feeling and desire were not simply the direct feeling of the will of God and the desire to do it. He had also *the unique feeling that God laid on him personal responsibility for leading all men to feel and do the will of God as he himself was feeling and doing it. This unique sense of responsibility for world leadership* was a growth which can be more or less successfully traced by an analysis of the collections of reminiscences and teachings that have come down to us in the Gospels. His unique sense of leadership was a vital part of his religious experience, something that he finally felt to be unavoidably involved in being faithful to his inner feeling of God. It necessarily assumed an outward expression in terms of current Jewish ideas such as "Messiahship," "Kingdom of God," "End of the Age." Some of the temporary implications of this Jewish phraseology became later part of a sacred Christian tradition and outlasted the sense of reality that they originally expressed. That which is of vital importance to us is the fundamental element in the religious experience of Jesus, namely, his profound sense that the will of God was thrusting upon him, or rather rising up in him to work into his very soul, a sense of responsibility for leading all men to unite with him in working with the will of God for the development of an honest, friendly, powerful world.

The will of God rising within him communicated to him God's own passion for men. The same tremendous

passion, or love, of God for men, which expressed itself in the long evolutionary process by which God brought men into being, filled the soul of Jesus with great confidence in the possibilities of men and with desire to see those possibilities realized. He stood over the apparent wrecks of human life with God's passionate desire in his soul and saw new men and women rise up out of the wreckage.

He said of all who would join him in doing the will of God, in working for an honest and friendly world, that they would be mother, sister and brother to him. He would gather men about him in such close personal relationship as to share his own religious experience with them. They would feel God as he did. The wonderful interpretation of his religious experience found in the Fourth Gospel brings this out in the message which he is represented to have sent by a woman to his "brothers": "Go to my brothers and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." They would feel men as he felt them, putting themselves in the place of others as he did; they would follow him in giving all men a square deal, in doing unto others as they would that others should do unto them. They would share his experience in feeling God within them pouring out forgiving love to penitent men: "whoseover sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them." They would share their leader's power to bring wonderful things to pass: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers"; "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do." That is, Jesus is represented in the Gospels to have felt the will of God thrusting him into the responsibility of supreme world leadership in the sphere of religion, a leadership in which he would liberate all men from bondage to evil by leading them into such measure of his own religious ex-

perience as they might be trained to achieve. It involved for them long discipline in his own life of honesty and friendliness but with victorious hope of success. His great disciple had caught his thought when he taught his converts that by "speaking truth in love" they might become "full grown" men reaching even "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." [2]

Have this deepest feeling and strongest desire of Jesus found any corroboration for themselves in what he has shown himself able to do? Is he like a man with an artist's feeling and desire in his soul who shows himself able to paint the great picture? Is he succeeding in claiming men for his great enterprise? Is he getting men to join him in working with the will of God in its evolution of an honest, friendly, powerful race of men?

Before considering this inquiry there are still other points to be noted in the effort to tell who Jesus was and what of it.

[2] Ephesians 4 : 15.

## Chapter VI

# HOW DOES THE SUFFERING OF JESUS HELP MEN?

In trying to tell who Jesus is and what of it in such a way as to bring into the lives of men the moral incentive that God pours into human life through him, we face the fact of his suffering.

### *Suffering one element in the life of Jesus*

Suffering in his life, as in all human life, was simply one element in a complex experience. The record of his public life in Galilee is a record of exuberant gladness. He "came eating and drinking." He "exulted in the Holy Spirit" as he went about curing the sick; restoring cripples to useful work, self-support and self-respect; turning back into orderly community life the many disordered minds preyed upon by current superstition; seeing the poor, the disheartened and evil-minded rise up into new life as he brought with the penetrating power of his friendship the good word about the nearness of the heavenly Father and the better days to come.

But in later months, when he felt the will of God pressing into his soul the responsibility of a leadership best described at the time as "Messianic," the element of suffering began to grow. As the experience deepened it became a tense expectation of an overwhelming climax in the near future which led him to say: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" As the climax drew near he began to feel a sort of terror that he described as like unto death: he

"began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled" and said that his soul was "exceeding sorrowful even unto death." During the hours of arrest, court trial, and execution that swiftly followed he evidently passed through a religious experience of profound suffering entirely beyond the sphere of physical pain.

*Men's sense of the connection of Jesus' suffering with their moral victory*

Men have seized upon this outstanding feature of Jesus' religious experience, his suffering, and have connected it with the moral victory that has been experienced as they have adopted at any cost Jesus' ideals of life and have let their affections follow him out into the unseen world.

It has been inevitable that men should look for some rational explanation of the connection between the suffering of Jesus and the remarkable moral victories that have appeared in the lives of those who look to him as leader. These explanations have necessarily been made in the terms of contemporary thought. In no other way could they be made real and valid for each generation. But human thought through the centuries has been passing through various stages of development and this has necessitated the re-casting of these explanations. The different explanations that made the matter clear to men who lived in the varying thought worlds of the first and third and sixteenth centuries may not make the matter clear to men who live in the thought world of the twentieth century. The effort to force upon the twentieth century an explanation suitable to the obsolete thought world of a past century tends to discredit the religious experience by making it seem artificial. Fortunately the experience of moral redemption goes on generation after generation in the lives of those who adopt the ideals of Jesus at any

cost and let their affections follow him out into the unseen world, whatever be their attitude toward any one of the various "theories of the atonement" that have been helpful at different periods in the long history of Christian experience.

*What does the suffering of Jesus mean to us?*

As a matter of personal experience what do we find in the suffering of Jesus that brings us moral incentive and that we can *with enthusiasm and passion* urge upon men whom we wish to see begin the Christian life?

We see in Jesus the supreme human religious experience with the will of God, the will of God let out into human feeling and action. In the will of God there must be both joy and pain — the joy of carrying life forward and the pain that a Father must feel when his unselfish life and desire press up against the brutal selfishness of his human children (p. 26). As the will of God rose in the soul of Jesus he shared both its joy and pain. *In his deepening experience with it he came to feel the feeling of God about the wrong-doing of men.* His desire for men deepened as God's desire for them unfolded in his soul and his suffering over their wrong-doing became keener as the element of suffering in the will of God pressed up for larger expression within him. In the last days and hours his desire for the righteousness of his nation and of the world, which his nation had seemed appointed to lead into righteousness, grew into a consuming passion. It expressed itself in the bitter cry, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" In those tense hours the leaders of the nation pressed against him and the will of God within

him with a hard brutal hatred which struck him down in the open shame of crucifixion. *In the suffering of Jesus' soul over the wrong-doing of men, we have an everlasting expression of the suffering that constitutes one element in the vast will of the heavenly Father.* If there were nothing else but suffering it would be a picture of weakness, but it is the suffering of strength. The will of God has been strong enough to vitalize the process that has brought life up from amœba to men. The Christ on the cross was a strong Christ, one who had lived a life of matchless moral power prophetic of the best that man can ever hope to be.

*The utmost that a father can do to get back a son who has gone wrong is to show his son how he feels in the center of his being about his wrong-doing.* The utmost that a father can do to cure a child of lying is in some way to show the child how he hates a lie. If he does not hate a lie he can do little to redeem the child from falseness to truth. There is a powerful illustration of this in the Life of Professor Austin Phelps:

"He and honor were one thing in our minds. The scene in his study when one of his eldest children told the first lie is too well remembered. The child was seven, and the falsehood was proved and acknowledged. To the young father this commonplace incident was a heart-rending experience. He had come home from a journey exhausted; but the moral crisis must not wait for a man to rest. The awe in the little offender's heart when the fatigue of travel deepened upon that sensitive face with the deadly pallor of overwhelming emotion cannot be forgotten yet. He spoke to the child in a low, stern, yet quivering voice such as befitted the solemnity of some tremendous moral event. It ceased to be an event, — it became an epoch to have uttered a falsehood. He spoke of the holiness of truth and of the beauty of honor; he

dwelt in language quite clear to the little child's mind on the enormity of that little act.

"Beneath his breath he touched for a moment upon the tendency of falseness in the heart. Liars he said in an awestruck, all but inaudible tone, *liars* he said went to hell. But then and there before the child could cower before the moral shock of his displeasure, a displeasure which coming from the ideal of fatherly gentleness, seemed like the rebuke of offended God Himself — this too human father bowed his face and wept bitterly. Those heavy sobs, that melting sight never heard or seen before or since, effected what word or rod could not have done. Awed into shame, silenced by this revelation of the truth that no soul sinneth to itself, the child crept to his feet and sobbed with him. At that hour was the abhorrence of dishonor born in the heart. That lie was the last."

In the profound religious experience of Jesus' last hours the heart of God was laid open to human eyes. Men have never been able to turn their eyes away from it. An increasing number of men look at it, generation after generation, try to understand and explain its meaning. It becomes more and more clear, as Jesus' great missionary disciple said, that "*God was in Christ* reconciling the world unto himself." Men find God and repent at the cross of Christ.

In that great tragedy men see what the real nature of human selfishness is. They see that human selfishness will strike down anything that gets between it and its desire, as it could be shown that the political and ecclesiastical machine did in the case of Jesus. The person who is selfish in what are apparently unimportant details of daily life, may see there what selfishness really becomes when highly developed. An inconspicuous sore spot in the skin is not understood until one has looked at a highly

developed case of cancer and seen there what the sore spot means.

Men see in the suffering of Jesus not simply how far human selfishness will go, but how far the heart of God goes in its reclaiming desire. Jesus on the cross could have used the words he is said to have uttered the evening before: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Jesus' suffering was not an isolated expression of the element of suffering in the will of God. He taught his disciples that as the prophets had so suffered in other days they too must join him in this as in all other experiences with the will of God. He represented himself as at the head of a long procession of men going out through the city gates to the place of execution. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." The suffering of the innocent inflicted by the evil will has in the nature of the case redemptive value. The soul of man is so made that when it sees such suffering it resents the presence of the selfish evil will in itself and is redeemed from bondage to it.

### *The suffering of Jesus and God's forgiveness of sin*

What has been already said of the suffering of Jesus may be applied to the great fact of God's forgiveness of man's sin. There is in Christian thought a vital connection between the suffering of Jesus and God's forgiveness of man's wrong-doing.

#### *What is God's forgiveness?*

God's forgiveness involves three things: (1) a wrong done to God by a man; (2) the man's repentance, that is, the wrong regretted, stopped, and, if possible, made right; (3) a change on the part of God from disapproving to approving love. The heart of a heavenly Father never

ceases to love, but so long as the wrong is unrepented the love is a disapproving love. When a child disobeys his father, the father does not cease to love him, but as a true right-minded father he resents and disapproves the disobedience. When the disobedience is repented the father's love breaks out in some form of approval. Very impressive language is used in the Bible to describe the enthusiasm with which God expresses his approval of penitent men. He sinks their sins in the unexplored depths of the sea far out from continents and men. Their sins are cast behind the back of the Infinite One. In the plain, homelike speech of Jesus, the forgiving God is like a father who, at the first sight of his penitent son far down the homeward road, runs to meet him, throws his arms about his neck, kisses him over and over again and when he gets him home gives him the best things there.

*What wrong has a man done to God?*

In what way could a frail man wrong the mighty God? What could a man do to God which would in any sense hurt God and for which a man ought to apologize to God? The wrong done springs out of the character of God and the nearness of God to the life of man. God is a loving Mind Energy set close to the life of a man, always feeling of him and saying, "I want you. I want you." His love is, in the teaching of Jesus, the love of a father for a child whom the father plans to gather into a great enterprise which it is his fundamental ambition to accomplish. Now if a son fails to work with his father in an enterprise in which his father ought to have his cooperation, the father suffers a grievous wrong. When a father sends his son to a technical school to prepare for a responsible place in the father's extensive manufacturing plant, and the son wastes his time in dissipation, the father suffers a wrong

for which his son, when he comes to himself, will apologize. If the son does paltry things instead of the main thing for which he was sent to college he wrongs his father; if he neglects his studies and runs a peanut stand on the corner of the campus he owes his father an apology. If a son in any way abuses or neglects his brothers and sisters in their time of need he hurts his father at a most sensitive point. Nothing hurts a father so much as to have his children abused or neglected. That is, when a man in a life of growing selfishness sets himself against the steady pressure of the unselfish loving will of God in any form of social, personal, or business life, a grievous wrong is inflicted on the will of God. God is hurt and an apology involving a fundamental reorganization of life is necessary.

*What does God do through Jesus to make forgiveness possible?*

Since God's forgiveness (not love), as defined above, can take place only on condition of repentance, it is natural to ask, What does God do through Jesus to make forgiveness possible? The righteous desire to forgive involves doing everything possible to induce the repentance that is the essential condition of forgiveness. What God does to make men repent and quit their selfishness has been already discussed (p. 48). Here where it is the personal affront to God involved in human selfishness that is especially in view, it is in place to re-emphasize the exhibition of God's personal feeling that is made by him over against human selfishness. This personal feeling comes to its clearest historical expression, as was said above, in the life of Jesus, and especially in the final suffering of soul that brought Jesus to physical collapse in death before there was time for the crucifixion wounds to kill him. This distress of Jesus' soul, which was the rising within

him of the element of pain in the will of God, has made the cross on which Jesus hung a symbol of penitence and forgiving love. Perhaps this has contributed in some cases to an unwarranted and superficial literalism. The significant spiritual fact would be just the same if Jesus had been hanged or electrocuted instead of crucified. When a man sees Jesus brought to a premature death by spiritual pain over the selfishness of men, realizes that this is an expression of one element in the heart of the heavenly Father, and, according to the measure of his meager ability, feels the same way over his own selfishness, then he comes to an agreement with God in Christ, in God's feeling about his selfish life. The great "reconciliation"[1] takes place. He is in a vital sense "crucified with Christ." He feels about his own selfishness as Jesus Christ felt about all selfishness when he was being crucified. The purifying power of his heavenly Father's forgiving love works out in his penitent heart redemption from his bondage to the selfish habit. The burden of *feeling the feeling* of the heavenly Father about the selfishness of his children has been laid upon the consciousness of Jesus, and men, moved to penitence by the sight, experience moral redemption.

*Does God's forgiveness remove the consequences of sin?*

It might seem as if in a world where the law of cause and effect is universal nothing could remove the natural consequences of human sin. And yet it is evident that the one great effect of sin is at once removed by the forgiveness which follows repentance. That great consequence is the disapproval of God. The sense of estrangement from God disappears at once and is replaced by a

[1] This is the word which in the Revised Version of the New Testament has replaced the word "atonement" that occurred once in the Old Version of the New Testament.

glad sense of being reconciled to God. This is a common experience in the many sins, repentances, and forgivenesses that characterize all friendship whether with God or men.

On the other hand there are certain consequences of sin that are not removed by forgiveness. Sin, or selfishness, injures the personality of the sinner. It blights and stunts personality. In regard to these consequences of sin it may be said that forgiveness establishes a relationship that tends in the course of time to remove them. A child disobeys its mother by going out to play in the rain. There are two consequences of this disobedience: the mother's disapproval and a bad cold. When the child repents of the disobedience, throws its arms about the mother's neck and means never to disobey again, the mother's disapproval instantly disappears. The cold, however, continues; but under the mother's care it tends to disappear. That is, the great law of recuperation and recovery, that runs through all nature, begins to operate. It is another application of the law of cause and effect coming into the situation. When the prodigal son felt his father's arms about him all the estrangement, which was the chief consequence of his selfish life in the far country, disappeared, but it may have been a long time before he recovered from the physical effects of his dissipation sufficiently to do a full day's work. Still the atmosphere of the home tended to the recovery of physical health. When we extend our vision to include a life after death the prospect of complete recovery is brighter. This prospect comforts us at the point where we most need it, namely, the remembrance of the corrupting influence which we in our selfishness may have exerted upon those who are no longer within our reach. We may yet in the long future be able to do something to help in overcoming the evil effect of our lives upon them.

## Chapter VII

# THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

In presenting Jesus to men so that redeeming moral incentive shall pour into their lives, what shall be said about his resurrection? What was the resurrection of Jesus and what is its practical value in the experience of modern men?

*The resurrection a part of the religious experience of Jesus*

All of Jesus' life was a profound religious experience with the will of God. We can partly, and with reverent imagination, follow him through the religious experience of his trial before the Great Court, his hearing before the Procurator and the terrible hours when he hung in naked shame and agony of body and spirit on the cross. But what was his experience while Joseph and Nicodemus were wrapping the bruised limp body in cool linen? What was it while his body lay in the rock sepulcher? Where was he? What was he doing? Was his experience exactly what he had anticipated? Where is he now, and what is he doing? Did he before his death anticipate in detail all that he has experienced in the centuries since? If we believe in personal immortality at all we must of course believe in the personal immortality of Jesus. In that case, all these and other questions necessarily arise.

The belief of the early Christian leaders was that Jesus continued to have a religious experience with the will of God after his death. In this experience his passionate desire to share with men whatever might come to him from the will of God was as strong as ever. They ex-

pressed this idea by saying that "God raised him from the dead" and that he was "at the right hand of God making intercession for us." We should naturally expect this to be true, for if death is simply an incident in developing life, the consuming life passion of a great soul cannot abruptly cease with death. *Jesus' intense passion for working with the will of God in leading men forward into the creation of an honest and friendly world must have continued with unabated force after death.* The resurrection of Jesus, then, meant to him the corroboration of the sense of "Messianic" leadership which had been developed in his soul, as it had seemed to him by the will of God. This supreme leadership was continued after death and was to be further developed in ways that were perhaps yet to be learned by him in the long succession of human centuries.

*What was the resurrection of Jesus?*

Different answers would probably have been given to this question by different people in the large miscellaneous company of his disciples that was formed soon after his death. This company included Jews from many parts of the world.[1] Some Jews from Alexandria would probably have resented the idea that the dead body of Jesus had any connection with the experience. At the death of a good man the spirit was supposed to escape from its prison-body and to live a free bodiless life. On the other hand some Palestinian Jews would have considered the resurrection to have necessarily consisted in the revivifying of the corpse, or possibly the passage of the soul into another similar body. Still others would have thought of a resurrection as involving the transformation of the corpse into a superior kind of body, or the assumption of a superior kind of body without any connection with the corpse.

[1] Acts 2 : 5.

When these different classes of people heard that Jesus had experienced a " resurrection " each man assumed it to have been what he believed a resurrection must be. In this way a variety of views regarding the resurrection of Jesus probably at once became current and expressed themselves devoutly during the next few decades in appropriate narratives.

*The essence of the experience would seem to have been the actual presence of the personality of Jesus communicating to the disciples his own victorious sense of appointment by God to world leadership in the great movement to establish a race of honest, friendly, powerful men on the earth.* Something happened which convinced the inner circle of disciples that Jesus was still with them with unabated power and purpose, and which transformed their doubt and bitter disappointment into permanent enthusiasm. Whether or not the appearances of Jesus that accomplished this result could have been recorded by a camera or dictograph is a matter of no particular importance. The significant thing is that the religious experience of Jesus was being continued within the precincts of his human relationships. His career on earth was not ended. The life of God was continuing to pour moral incentive into the life of man through the personality of Jesus. This was being accomplished not simply through the remembrance of his career in Galilee, a little later perpetuated in historical Gospel records, but through his continued personal contact with human life.

### *The relation of the resurrection of Jesus to Christian experience*

The first Christians adopted the ideals of Jesus: they prayed to God and loved each other generously. They let their affections follow Jesus out into God's unseen

world, which necessarily seemed to them to be a series of physical heavens above, in the highest of which God's throne was established and Jesus was located in possession of supreme power under God. As a result there flowed into their souls a wealth of moral incentive that transformed their lives. It was accompanied in many instances by an emotional upheaval due to personal temperament, current fashions of religious experience, and the peculiar presuppositions of their thought world. Its deeper and more lasting influence was found in the experience of a new "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control."

This wonderful Christian experience in the course of no long time penetrated various religious and philosophical thought worlds of the day. Wherever it went it seized upon the high titles used in each for deities and claimed them for Jesus, the source under God of their wonderful experience. He was proclaimed as "Logos," "Lord," "Saviour," in sections of the Greco-Roman world where these titles were used to denote high deities. Everywhere men found a new moral redemption as the Christian life spread and men looked up into the heavens to Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Is it necessary to attribute the religious and ethical success of Christians to the influence of the living personality and teaching of Jesus upon them? May not the idea of personal contact with the immortal spirit of Jesus, running through the centuries, be a delusion? Apparently not. The persistence of an idea constantly appealing to experience, in various types of temperaments, and in the face of a developing scientific scrutiny of all phenomena, makes the truthfulness of that idea highly probable. Furthermore, experience shows that men in general need such help as comes from the personal contact that they

think they have with the personality of Jesus. The probability, therefore, is that they have what they need rather than the delusion that they have what they need, especially when such a personality as they need is seen to have appeared historically in the race and to have anticipated the continuance of his connection with the life of the world. Otherwise we should have to say that Jesus Christ is the only person in the history of the race, imaginary connection with whom persistently works moral redemption. This is less reasonable than to suppose that the connection is real.

How shall we make modern men and women see how to avail themselves of the help that comes from God through Jesus? Our inherited answer to this question is that we must urge them to " believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved."

## Chapter VIII

# WHAT IS IT FOR A BAD MAN TO BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND BE SAVED?

To save a man is to rescue him from an evil career and its consequences. It means making a bad man permanently good.

*What is a bad man?*

God and man are by their very natures meant for each other. A bad man is a man who works against, instead of with, a good God. He fails to fall in with God in the mighty, subtle push of God's will for an honest and friendly world. Since the point of God's impact is in the depths of the man's being, in his heart, it is in his heart that resistance is made and the badness centers. He has no " faith " in his heart. That is, he does not mean in his heart to work together with the unseen energy of the will of God for an honest and friendly world. All badness, or sin, toward God is necessarily also sin against society, for God is set on producing a certain social result. The bad man sets himself against the great upward trend of the moral evolution of mankind, which the will of God is vitalizing. In the midst of an evolution in which all men ought to say, " What the world needs we will all work together with the will of God to get," he says, " What I want I take." He is a selfish man, that is, a man who looks out only for himself without considering the interests of others. His selfishness may be active or passive, defiant or lazy. " Wicked and slothful " were the adjectives

by which Jesus characterized such a man. It may be openly brutal, or superficially refined, luxurious and cultured.

There is no form of selfishness so private as not to be a matter of public social concern. A physician may lock himself up in a room where apparently he can injure no one but himself, and get dead drunk. But while he is drunk there may be an accident in which six men lose their lives because he was not on hand to give them the surgical aid that would have saved them. A soldier who indulges in any private vice which lessens his alertness at the time of a great drive sins against the members of his company, his officers, and the great cause for which the army is fighting. In God's great drive for an unselfish civilization any private vice which lessens a man's alertness is a sin against God and civilization. A man who assents to methods of doing business or to political measures that operate against the trend toward an honest and friendly world is bad. Certain methods and measures that are not ideal may be steps toward an ideal, but when they clearly block the way to something that is high and better, assent to them constitutes a form of badness.

### *Who are bad?*

It is not always easy to tell who are really bad. A man's character is determined by what he is becoming rather than by his present attainment, by the direction in which he is moving and not by his absolute position. It is impossible to determine at once whether a man is becoming more or less selfish. Appearances are not a certain guide. A man robust and florid, standing by an invalid in a wheel chair, may seem to be the more healthy of the two, but the robust man may have within him the beginnings of a fatal disease and the invalid may be on

his way to perfect health. The beginnings of unselfishness are sometimes found in very unpromising places. Jesus found them in many instances outside the synagogue.

Allowance must also be made for the fact that our standards of goodness and badness are sometimes quite artificial. A man whose conversation is loaded with oaths may seem to us worse than the woman who gives him a contemptuous stare, but the man's heart may be warm with unselfish purpose and the woman's frigidly indifferent to human need.

*What becomes of a persistently bad man?*

What are the natural and necessary consequences of selfishness in the personality of a selfish man? Is there to be anything in the future experience of such a man that he ought to dread and avoid? Can these consequences be so pointed out to a selfish man as to make him desire to be a Christian? Or is this an illegitimate appeal to a low motive? The passing away of the literal interpretation of certain Biblical statements regarding the bad man's future, has seemed sometimes to involve the idea that nothing very serious happens to him. But when a man actively or passively sets himself against the upward set of God's will toward universal honesty and friendliness something must in the nature of the case happen to him.

The natural consequence of setting one's self against honesty, or sincerity, is not hard to see. The man who fails to be honest is unready at any cost to see and report things just as they are rather than as he would like them to be. The necessary consequence is that *he loses the power to see things as they are.* The man who persistently misrepresents the value of real estate finally loses his power to make a true estimate and will be unable to trust his own judgment at a time when he would like very much

to do so. A class of men appear in the Gospels who faced Jesus with unwillingness to make a true estimate of the character of his deeds and words. The consequence was that with perverted moral vision they finally saw in him a product of hell — to their own terrible peril. These are the men in modern life to whom truth has ceased to seem true, the old men who sneer at the abused ideals of their own earlier years when they see younger men holding them.

The natural consequence of persistently failing to take a friendly interest in others is *loss of the power to feel a friendly interest in any one.* It is the denial of a deep wholesome instinct of the soul. It is turning back into the soul, to stagnate there, a stream of interest meant to flow healthily out. This results in spiritual disease. It means dropping out of vital relationship with others and so being left alone. *Being left alone brings pain.* A little child has an instinctive dread of being left alone. The solitary cell is one of the most painful forms of prison discipline.

The pain of loneliness is necessarily accompanied by *the pain of idleness*, for the person who is having no co-operation with others can do practically nothing. Jesus said, "I can do nothing of myself." Such a person is "lost," lost out of the group and place where he belongs, without friends and without work, an aimless wanderer. He is terribly described as one who "walks in the darkness and knows not whither he is going." He has no sense of direction or destination, no reason for going this way, rather than that. He gropes in thick darkness all alone.

"Thyself thy own dark jail."

Something like this we occasionally see, when a man in middle life or old age describes life as "beginning like a

dream and ending in a grope." When such a career is continued after death, it would seem that instead of being a member of a vast company of honest, friendly men working with God in the great enterprises of a super-world, this man would be puttering away sullenly, painfully, feebly in a little lonely self-made hell.

> "O doom beyond the saddest guess
> As the long years of God unroll
> To make thy dreary selfishness
> The prison of thy soul."

Is the final result idiocy, or insanity, or the dissolution of personality, or relapse into animalism, or may there be slow recovery of normality through painful discipline?

### *God's way of saving the bad man*

What is God's way of making a bad man good and so keeping him out of the heavy gloom of persistent selfishness?

The bad man is in God's world and God's world is a place calculated to develop unselfishness, not selfishness. A world produced by the long expensive process of evolution cannot have been intended to be a breeding ground for selfishness. The world is not a sinking ship to escape from, but is a great ship being built by God to be ready for some high enterprise.

God has put the friendly instinct deep down in the soul of man. The desire to get and give help wells up in every little child so ready to say, "Let me help!" It is in every mother's heart, even far back in the animal stages of man's evolution.

God has made friendship produce satisfaction and selfishness produce pain, as we have just seen.

God has evolved the daily life of man, a situation full of relationships tempting men into the friendly use of power.

The family with its sevenfold appeal made by mother, father, sister, brother, husband or wife, son and daughter is a tremendous incentive to unselfish living. Widespread suffering makes a powerful appeal especially in our day when multitudes of men and women, each having only a little to give, can quickly assemble their money and cable it to distant parts of the world.

The deep social trend compels men either to be friendly or be ruined. Business cannot go on unless all connected with it are ready for a square deal. Nations cannot develop unless they learn friendly cooperation. Everywhere irresistible forces are crowding men together and making them dependent on each other's honesty and friendliness.

Most important of all, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, God has introduced into his wonderful world in the fulness of time a personality who more and more, century after century, operates as a great Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

*What is it to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?*

To believe in a person is to accept him as what he supposes himself to be and to treat him accordingly. A physician supposes himself able to cure a certain serious disease from which we are suffering. If we believe in him we accept his estimate of his ability and treat him accordingly, that is, we take his medicine and follow his directions. We do not believe in him without evidence. We need to find out what his medical training has been and what success he has had.

When we believe in a leader we do four things: (1) We convince ourselves that his ideals are true and practicable; they are neither erroneous nor doctrinaire. (2) We convince ourselves that he is genuinely devoted to them himself; he will make any necessary sacrifice in order to

realize them. (3) We adopt these ideals as our own, prepared to make any personal sacrifice necessary for their realization; and (4) we try to secure all possible personal connection with the leader himself. Believing in a leader in this way means committing ourselves to the movement of which he is the leader. It means joining him in his enterprise.

In order to believe in Jesus therefore, it is necessary to see first of all what his ideals are and how he proposes to realize them. They stand out in simplicity and clearness in the Gospels. There are three of them, two of which we have continually been emphasizing: (1) God is a powerful heavenly Father near at hand; all men should pray to him and work with him for an honest and friendly world. (2) Men must work together with invincible good will for human brotherhood, for a civilization in which every man will wish for all other men such a fair chance at all good things as a man would like his brother to have. (3) Men should with growing conviction count upon an opportunity after death to continue working together for the common good.

It is clear that these ideals are true and practicable. It is being demonstrated in our day that civilization cannot persist unless these ideals are given a dominant place in social, industrial and political life. It is clear that Jesus gave himself with utter sincerity to their realization, and that he was convinced that God laid upon him the responsibility of supreme leadership in a world movement for their realization. Therefore when we believe in Jesus we adopt his ideals at any cost and reach out for whatever connection with his person may prove upon experiment to be available. *We find in him such an expression of the life of God in terms of human life, death, and immortal spiritual presence as warrants the glad surrender*

*of our lives to him, a living Lord and Leader in a great world enterprise.*

This following of his leadership is of such a nature as to develop the initiative essential to character. It does not subject us at any point to sheer authority. We have to use judgment and take some wholesome chances in the effort to discern his form leading the way in the unfolding will of God. We have wholesome responsibility laid upon us for discovering how his clearly stated ideals are to find proper realization in the industrial, social, political life of our day. Such "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ" results in "salvation."

*What is salvation?*

Salvation means being saved, or rescued, from a daily life of growing selfishness and its ultimate ruin of personality, to a daily life of growing unselfishness and its inevitable enlargement of life. It involves a deepening acquaintance with God, to know whom is eternal life, for in following Jesus Christ as leader we are following the clearest, most concrete expression of the life of God known to man. We are following him into such doing of the will of God, such direct working with the will of God as necessarily results in knowing God. Being saved through "believing on Jesus Christ" involves also the vital righting of all social relationships, because in Jesus Christ is expressed God's great passion for a truly social life, an honest and friendly world.

Does this mean that the person who has "believed on Jesus Christ" will commit no more selfish acts? It means rather that by connecting himself with Jesus Christ and his ideals he has met the conditions essential to the successful growth of the unselfish habit. He has received into his life a re-enforcement that insures success. He is

like an army that has been so re-enforced that the crisis of the battle is past, and hard fighting through the rest of the day is certain to bring victory. The moral re-enforcement that comes from the life of God and his Christ in the unseen world is often called by Christians " the Holy Spirit," or " the Spirit of God."

### *What is the Holy Spirit?*

The term Holy Spirit was traditional in Jewish religious teaching before Jesus' day. Its use seems to have developed in a time when God was localized in the highest of a number of stationary heavens, and was thought of as affecting life on earth by sending spirits, and finally the Holy Spirit of God. It was naturally expected that the influence of God on human life would be all pervasive in the Messianic New Age. The New Age, therefore, would be the Age of the Spirit of God; God's Spirit would be " poured out on all flesh." Therefore that mighty moral kindling in the hearts of believers which followed the resurrection of Jesus was necessarily thought of as the might of the Spirit of God in the souls of men beginning the New Age. It was a subduing and at the same time an uplifting influence that made men fearless. It took away the four dark fears that rested with heavy gloom on life in the first century: fear of poverty, slavery, death, and demons or fate. Christians did not fear poverty; they even gave away their property. They did not fear slavery; Christian slaves were even advised to refuse emancipation if it should be offered to them. They did not fear death; it was a going to be with Christ. They did not fear fate or demons; they looked toward fateful astral powers in the cold stars above them, and thought of the dark demons' underworld beneath them, knowing

that neither height nor depth could separate them from the love of Christ.

The essential, permanent feature of this experience in our day is the sense of the rising of the cleansing life of God within us, the purifying power of the friendship of the living Christ. Perhaps we need to guard against impairing the spontaneity and simplicity of this experience by trying to force it into the fixed traditional mold of a metaphysical doctrine of the Holy Spirit. However this may be, the point is that a mighty re-enforcement of moral purpose comes from the unseen world into the hearts of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that this produces "salvation" both for the individual and the social system that is in process of becoming an honest and friendly world.

*What is an honest and friendly world?*

We might logically enough at this point try to picture in detail the sort of human society that would adequately represent the ideals of Jesus in the stage of social evolution that the world has now reached. Is there any place in it for the competitive principle? For the wage system in industry? For exclusively communal ownership? What is the place of nationalism and inter-nationalism? What about inter-racial and inter-class relationships? These and many other questions are thrust upon men as items in the unfolding will of God under the spiritual leadership of Jesus Christ. But in urging men to begin the Christian way of living it would seem to be a mistake to identify the Christian life with any specific answer to these questions. In beginning the Christian life a man commits himself to candid inquiry, in a spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion, regarding the proper expression of the ideals of Jesus in all phases of modern life. A man may not be

relieved from the character-making necessity of answering these questions for himself. How the church may help him in this process is a question to be raised in a later chapter.

A certain phase of traditional Christian thought is being emphasized just now in a way that tends to paralyze the sense of responsibility for applying the teaching of Jesus to all phases of life. It is often represented to be an essential element in "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ." It is the conviction that Jesus is to return in visible form to the earth whenever human society has become sufficiently degenerate to demand such a demonstration. All effort to stop this degeneration by the application of Christian principles to social life is thought to be unadvisable because it delays the return of Jesus on the clouds.

*Will Jesus come back to earth on the clouds?*

Probably no one who recognizes the great religious values of the evolutionary theory feels like dogmatizing about the future of the human race on this planet. What cataclysms might possibly take place in a great evolutionary process and what religious values might be involved in such cataclysms no one can foresee. But certain things seem reasonably clear.

We see that God has arranged a process of world development in which men, when they have suffered enough as a result of any evil, will rise up to work with God in the discovery and removal of its cause (p. 26). One of the most interesting stages in the evolution of civilization ever known in the history of man seems now to have arrived. It is the point at which man has made a most interesting beginning in the mastery for the common good of the resources of the earth, sea, air, and inter-stellar spaces; in the understanding and creative use of the

principle of evolution; in grappling with the Christian problem of world brotherhood in the sphere of industry, practical politics, and international diplomacy. Why should God break in at this interesting point with a cataclysm and deprive man of the great chance for effort and glorious achievement that the best men are eager to use and that all God's past dealing with the race seems to have been preparing men to use? For centuries God has been developing human character by laying on men the responsibility of working with him under the spiritual leadership of Jesus Christ for the creative evolution of an honest and friendly world. Why should he now abandon this policy and snatch this great character-making opportunity out of their hands? Men are beginning to see that the spirit of honesty and friendliness must pervade all phases of human life if civilization is to persist; they are feeling the spirit of Christ calling them to follow him in the great Christian enterprise; and a rapidly growing number of men are ready to follow him at any personal cost. At such a juncture why revert to a temporary view of God and the world that naturally enough passed into primitive Christian thought from its Jewish and pagan environment?

## Chapter IX

# LIFE AFTER DEATH

*How, if at all, can the prospect of life after death be used as a motive to induce men to begin the Christian way of living?*

Evidently only by showing why a future life would be desirable, and that the chance to live it depends upon living the Christian life here and now. It might seem logically necessary to show first of all the reasons for believing that there will be a future life. But practically this is not the first thing to do. Men have very little difficulty in believing in the reality of anything that seems thoroughly desirable. Most men have a sublimely optimistic belief that nothing is too good for them, that whatever seems really desirable will in some way turn out to be possible. Therefore the first thing is to form a rational idea of a desirable future life.

The popular idea of the future life is largely determined by certain statements in the Bible, calculated to appeal to a sensuous Oriental temperament of the first century, enduring physical distress inflicted by relentless persecutors. The filthy clothing of vermin-infested prisoners is to be replaced by pure white linen; the chained hands are to be freed to wave palms of victory; the calloused fingers of slaves who are working in mines or rowing in the galleys will play soft music on harps; the terrible thirst and heat of the blazing noonday sun under brutal overseers begat visions of shady places where "neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat," and where shepherds

direct them to cool fountains of living waters; frightened tear-stained faces of women who beg for mercy before merciless officials are to be wiped dry by the gently omnipotent hand of God. The long sad processions of Armenians moving out into the hot desert could appreciate these words, but the multitude of men, women, and children with whom we have to do in ordinary times do not feel their appeal. Such pictures of the future life seem to them unreal, simply literary productions. Such a future life does not seem to spring naturally and necessarily out of real life as we know it now. It lacks the element of adventure that makes the present life attractive. It is too tame to be really desired.

*What may we suppose the future life to be?*

It seems natural to think of the future life as some larger development along the line of the highest trends of the present one. The highest experiences of the present life have been seen to be interesting work and reliable friendships, work for the common good in friendly cooperation with God and men. The future life, therefore, should be a situation in which men in honesty and friendliness will work powerfully together with the will of God upon the unfinished universe of God. The universe as we look out upon it from this planet is evidently an unfinished universe. Everything is in process of becoming. We think then of life after death as participation in a civilization in which life never weakens, work never gives out, friendships never end. We think of it as a life full of adventure—challenging difficulties, high successes hardly won after many failures, great sacrifices, much hearty human laughter. We think of it as the "future" life only in its relation to the present of an individual now on earth. As a matter of fact it must be for millions the

" present " life, and the life that they have been living for ages past. It is the larger life that perhaps environs us on every side in a " world " which we have no organs consciously to perceive.

The hope of such a life is free from the reproach with which those who hold it are often met. It is sometimes represented to be far nobler to do one's utmost in the honest and friendly life here without being hired to do so by the promise of a future reward in heaven. But the future life as conceived above is not future reward in return for so much present sacrifice. The hope of it is simply the desire to keep on working with a multitude of others for the common good. Anyone who did not resent the idea that his chance to work for the common good must end with death would be a moral quitter. He would show that he did not care enough about the unselfish, honest, friendly life to wish to keep on living it. He would show that he did not care enough about other men and God to wish to go on working with them forever. He may feel that there is no good reason for believing in a continuation of consciousness after death but he will regret the unwelcome conclusion. Herbert Spencer said that " it seems a strange and repugnant conclusion that with the cessation of consciousness at death there should cease to be any consciousness of having existed." [1] Professor Huxley said: " It flashes across me at times with a sort of horror that in 1900 I shall probably know no more of what is going on than I did in 1800." [2]

### *Why should we expect a future life?*

It might seem as if the natural thing to do at this point would be to examine human personality and see whether

[1] " Facts and Comments," p. 103.
[2] *Life*, Volume II, p. 67.

the mind or soul shows some power to survive the dissolution of the body. The effort to do this has not yielded any decisive result. There are certain facts which indicate such superiority of mind to body as would lead to the supposition that the mind could get on without a body. On the other hand there are phenomena which indicate that the so-called soul is so dependent upon the body that it could not exist without a body. Professor Ladd of Yale in 1915 summed up the evidence from the psychologists' standpoint in these words: "The results of more than forty years' study of the subject enables the author to say that in his judgment the case as it stands at present is a 'drawn battle,' with the accumulating evidences from the purely scientific points of view turning against rather than in favor of the objections"; that is, turning against the objections to immortality. The connection of the soul with the body "is not absolute and necessarily final; it may be — and indeed there are certain good grounds for believing that it is — capable of developing powers by which it shall outgrow this condition of dependence."[3] Bergson in 1912 said: "But if, as I have tried to show, the mental life overflows the cerebral life, if the brain does but translate into movements a small part of what takes place in consciousness, then survival becomes so probable that the onus of proof falls on him who denies it rather than him who affirms it."[4]

It might seem, too, that we should look to communications from the dead for evidence of the survival of the soul after the death of the body. While very interesting data have appeared in the investigation of the Society for Psychic Research it cannot be said that any very satisfactory results have been secured.

[3] Ladd, "What May I Hope," pp. 223f.

[4] Bergson, "Mind Energy," p. 73.

The field is left clear for the introduction of certain great general considerations that grow steadily stronger with the evolution of Christian experience.

(1) It violates our sense of justice to suppose that men who have made great sacrifice to secure advantage for the race should have no chance to participate in the advantage they have sacrificed so much to gain. The injustice would not seem so flagrant in the case of those who are fairly well off, possessed of good incomes, interesting work and friends. But there are multitudes of others who always live under painfully adverse conditions during their long period of sacrifice for the common good. It would seem a flagrant injustice that Jesus whose suffering has worked out so mightily for the advancement of the race should have no participation in that which his suffering gained.

> "But were he man,
> And death ends all; then was that tortured death
> On Calvary a thing to make the pulse
> Of memory quail and stop."

(2) If there is no life after death there would seem to be a shameful waste of supreme values. This is not a wasteful universe. It is one in which there is a conservation of energy. It would seem as if the supreme form of energy found in personal character must be expected to survive. Especially if a man is the product of a long expensive evolutionary process would it seem intellectually confusing to find his existence snuffed out when he reaches the climax of desire for immortal occupation. "Now the more thoroughly we comprehend that process of evolution by which things have come to be what they are, the more we are likely to feel that to deny the everlasting persistence of the spiritual element in Man is to rob the whole process of its meaning. It goes far toward putting us to perma-

nent intellectual confusion, and I do not see that any one has yet alleged, or is ever likely to allege, a sufficient reason for our accepting so dire an alternative." [5]

(3) If there is no personal immortality then ultimately the whole human race, it would seem, goes to waste, for there seems reason to suppose that the earth will finally become uninhabitable. When that time has come the long career of humanity will have produced nothing that survives. This consideration weighed heavily with Darwin. "With respect to immortality nothing shows me (so clearly) how strong and almost instinctive a belief it is, as the consideration of the view now held by most physicists, namely, that the sun with all the planets will in time grow too cold for life, unless indeed some great body dashes into the sun and thus gives it fresh life. Believing as I do that man in the distant future will be a far more perfect creature than he now is, it is an intolerable thought that he and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such long-continued slow progress. To those who freely admit the immortality of the human soul, the destruction of our world will not seem so dreadful." [6]

(4) If in some way the planet should be preserved and the race continued, there could be no perfect civilization possible on earth without personal immortality. A perfect civilization is one in which personal relations are perfect, that is, one in which men love each other in true friendship. But when men fully recognize the fact that friendship cannot last, then they will so suffer over friendship hopelessly broken by death that there can be no perfect civilization. Probably in such a situation men would refuse to let friendships grow. But that would

[5] John Fiske, "The Destiny of Man," p. 115f.
[6] Darwin, "Life and Letters," Volume I, p. 282.

mean no perfect civilization. When men become convinced that there is no personal immortality civilization is doomed to remain on a low level.

(5) Personal immortality is necessarily involved in the Christian idea of God. The Christian God is a Christlike heavenly Father. Such a being loves his children. If they were to go out forever one by one in death, he would be hopelessly sorrowing.

The Christian God is a powerful Father. It would be a cheap, weak, unchristian God who could not keep his child in existence. It is inconceivable from the Christian standpoint that a friendship with the mighty God which has been developing through a lifetime should be utterly extinguished by a bullet crashing through the brain! A necessary corollary to the proposition that there is a heavenly Father is the immortality of the heavenly Father's child.

*What is the practical advantage of a belief in immortality?*

We have considered a working theory regarding the character of the future life and reasons for believing that there will be such a life. What good does it do to count on it? How does such a counting on it help a person here and now to begin, and keep on in, the Christian way of living? What effect has a belief in the future life on present character?

Good character may be defined as the state of personality in which a growing good will is expressing itself in increasingly efficient action. When a man is becoming a truer friend and is getting power to express his friendliness in some useful form of work, his whole personality is in a certain state or condition which may be comprehensively described by the phrase "good character." Starting with this definition it is clear that a belief in personal

immortality has a clear and direct influence upon character.

*Belief in immortality makes a man more painstaking in the development of his friendships, because it makes them seem more valuable*

One element in value is durability. A soap bubble may for a moment be as beautiful as a diamond, but it is not as valuable, because, among other reasons, it is not as durable. When men are recognized as immortal, friendship becomes a lasting phenomenon which it is worth while to cultivate. No one takes pains to develop acquaintance with his fellow passengers on a street-car because he and they are not long to be together. If, however, he is traveling across a continent, or making a long ocean voyage, he at once endeavors to establish friendly relations with his fellow travelers because he and they have a long journey to make together. If he sees among his fellow passengers some one with whom he has had trouble, he seeks an early opportunity to come to a friendly understanding with him because they have a long journey to make together.

Furthermore these immortal personalities are doing a bigger thing than they could possibly be doing if their activity were confined to a brief lifetime, and so the friendly relationship with them has more significance than it could otherwise have. When people a few years ago recognized the fact that a certain man walking along the street was not the ordinary pedestrian he seemed to be, but, instead, was Mr. Weston making his long walk from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, they all applauded him. He was making a longer journey, doing a bigger thing, than was at first evident. So when a man realizes that his friend has begun an immortal career the possible

achievements of which no man can measure, friendship with him assumes a new significance.

*Belief in a future life contributes to the development of good character by making a man take more pains with his work*

Belief in a future life leads a man to do more honest work, for, as has been said above, those who would be affected by dishonest work are recognized by him as more valuable beings since they are immortal. Anyone feels more obligation to be honest with a man than with a dog, because men are more valuable than dogs. Immortal men are more valuable than merely mortal men would be, and so dishonest work done for them is a more serious matter than it would otherwise be. It was probably for this reason that the *Wall Street Journal* a few years ago in an editorial said that anyone would rather do business with a man who believes in immortality than with one who does not.

The man who believes in immortality will take more pains with his work because he believes that in this way he proves his right to have work of a high order assigned to him in the future life. The best thing about a piece of work well done is that it registers itself in the personality of the man who does it, and he goes forward fit for a more important task than he would be fit for if he had left a slovenly piece of work behind him. The way in which a man does the job he has in this life determines the kind of job it will be safe to give him in the next life. If he does his work well he lives under the great law of enlarging opportunity: "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things."

*Belief in immortality contributes to good character by giving a man the poise and self-control essential to the finest work and the best friendship*

It is the small frictions of life, producing nervous irritation, that destroy the fineness of friendship and prevent putting fine finish on work. What is needed is some big inspiration constantly operating in life, something big enough to make all small things seem small. A man may be making an ocean journey in an uncomfortable ship with very inadequate and irritating service, but if he knows that every throb of the machinery drives him nearer friends and home, the irritating circumstances seem small and lose their power to annoy. A pedestrian who finally stands in the presence of the Matterhorn forgets the blisters on his feet. So the man who has formed the daily practice of immortality has that within his life which makes small annoyances seem to be the petty things they really are. He has taken the long look toward that far horizon against which no trifle can loom up large. He has put himself under the steadying spell of eternity.

Belief in immortality gives the steadiness and poise essential to fine work and friendship because it relieves from the nervous strain of envy. Much of the irritation incident to living comes from the sullen discomfort we feel at seeing others have possessions or opportunities superior to our own. This tends to disappear when a man feels certain that there is a long time ahead, and that, if he does to the utmost of his ability every piece of work that comes his way, he is absolutely certain sometime and somewhere to have the largest opportunity he can possibly fit himself to use. He may see others go before him into positions that he would like to occupy himself,

and not be disturbed by it, because he is sure that if he does his utmost in his present position the long future will surely bring him his chance.

Life can go on successfully now, only on the condition that many first-class men hold second-class places. In any great business enterprise there must always be men in reserve to step forward at a moment's notice and fill a sudden vacancy in the front line of the administration. If this is not the case a great business may be wrecked. If men of first-rate ability are to be held in second-rate places they must feel some assurance that they will sometime and somewhere get their chance to make the largest contribution which they are capable of making to the common good.

## Chapter X

# SOME OBJECTIONS TO BEGINNING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Many objections are raised by men who begin to feel the obligation to join the Christian Enterprise pressing in upon them. The following are some of them:

(1) "Cannot succeed in business and be a Christian": The first inquiry here is what is meant by "succeeding in business." Does it mean laying up a sizable fortune, or does it mean making a living? If it means accumulating "a fortune," why should a man prefer accumulating a fortune to doing the thing he knows to be right? When the alternative is put to men in this definite form they feel the force of the obligation and many of them respond to it.

But only a comparatively small fraction of the entire population are moved at all by the expectation of becoming "rich." The rest look forward simply to having enough to carry them through life with a degree of comfort. In very few cases does being a Christian interfere with this prospect. Indeed as a matter of fact it generally increases the prospect of success so defined. In rare instances it may mean failure even to make a living. Hardly any one dies a martyr's death as a result of being a Christian, but occasionally some one must and does. Definitely facing this possibility does not make the Christian life unattractive.

Furthermore in meeting this objection it is helpful to inquire just what is the particular feature of business life

that must be given up in order to be a Christian. What would be a concrete case of it? It is generally seen to be something that the common conscience of men, Christian or non-Christian, resents, something so inherently mean that no one will openly defend it. "Business" is in the main honest and honorable. It is the world's work. It is a very large part of life. It has to proceed on lines that in the main lead upward and onward, on lines that are in accordance with the upward trend of the moral evolution of man. When Christian men, ready to apply the fundamental teachings of Jesus to all sides of life, go into business they find that the main lines of business are meant to proceed on Christian principles. The flagrantly un-Christian phases of business life appear almost entirely in connection with the desire to become "rich." The inherently Christian character of all "business," using "business" in the broad sense, is at once apparent, when we try to imagine what would happen if all the millions of honest and friendly business men in stores and banks, in factories and on farms should be replaced by dishonest and unfriendly men and women.

(2) "I shall be all right if I do the best I can": Here again, the issue is made clear by an understanding of what is meant by the words used. What is it to do the best one can? Is a person doing the "best he can" if he does not try to find out by experiment and experience whether or not there is a God all about him? Is he doing the "best he can" if he never prays; if he never takes pains to find out what the teaching of Jesus is, and what help in living an honest and friendly life men have received from God through him? When an apprentice goes into a shop to learn a trade he is not doing the "best he can" if he ignores the foreman. When a man is climbing the Swiss mountains he is not doing the "best he can" if he

ignores the guide-posts and fails to consult the guides whom he meets from time to time.

(3) "No interest in the subject": Here again an inquiry regarding the exact facts is in place. What is it he feels no interest in? Perhaps he has an utterly wrong idea of what the Christian life is. It has long been identified in his mind with some theory of the atonement or some doctrine of the trinity or the inerrancy of the Scriptures. When he finds out that being a Christian is a certain wonderful way of living and what that way of living is, he may realize that he is very much interested in it or, anyway, that he ought to be.

As has been said before, it may be possible to kindle his interest by beginning with the interest that he already has. Did he ever in any emergency, or in childhood, pray to God? Did any friend of his ever pray? Is he interested in any enterprise that is being carried on for the common good of the community and that returns nothing that is exclusively his own? What does he mean to accomplish in life? What is the thing that he thinks it would be most satisfactory to look back upon in old age as having been accomplished by him? Has he any interest in life after death? Has any friend ever died whom he would be glad to see again? Does it seem to him at all possible that his friend is still in existence? Does he believe that Jesus Christ ever lived? What does he think Jesus Christ stood for? Has he among his friends anyone who believes in Jesus Christ? Very many persons who on the surface seem even to themselves to have no interest in religion and who never go to church are nevertheless very much interested in certain essential features of the Christian way of living.

(4) "The inconsistencies of Christians": But does he not know some Christian who is consistent? Anyway the

definite thing wanted of him is that he shall adopt Jesus Christ's wonderful way of living and reach out to the immortal spirit of Jesus for whatever help may be had. The fact that some others pretend to have done this but have not is no reason why he should not. The fact that Benedict Arnold pretended to be a loyal citizen and was not, would not have excused George Washington for refusing to be loyal to the Colonial cause. The fact that Judas Iscariot pretended to be a disciple and was not, would not have justified Peter for refusing discipleship.

Furthermore some who seem inconsistent may turn out to be persons who are contending against great odds and are really winning out.

(5) "Have tried it and failed": What were the facts in the case? What considerations induced him to try it? Perhaps he never made his trial of the Christian life in view of any considerations, but simply under stress of some merely emotional appeal. If certain reasonable considerations influenced him at that time are they not still valid?

How did he come to give up the attempt to live the Christian life? Perhaps some temptation got the better of him and a reawakened conscience may do its work again. Has he got on better since he gave up the Christian life than he did while he was living it?

(6) "Some things in the Bible I do not believe": But are there not some things in the Bible that he does believe? If so, what are they? And will he commit himself with all his heart to living in accord with what he does believe?

The Bible reports the high spots in the growing acquaintance with God experienced by one section of the human race. Its outstanding feature is its report of the religious experience of Jesus Christ and of men who fol-

lowed his lead. The comparative value of its very different parts, produced in widely separated periods of time, and the extent to which it may incorporate erroneous and transient ideas are matters which can be settled by critical study. Its challenging feature is Jesus Christ and his wonderful way of living. This challenge is insistent and unavoidable, a challenge that is involved in the very nature of life. It stands out to be met in some way by every man, no matter what he may think about the credibility or incredibility of some parts of the Bible.

(7) "Christianity may not be the ultimate religion": We need not be immediately concerned to know whether it is or not. The main question is, Does it meet the immediate need of men? If it does, we should make use of it. The steam and trolley cars may not be the ultimate modes of transportation, but if they best meet present need we ought to use them. If there is an evolution in religion we shall be sure of the best ultimate results if we yield ourselves to what is best now. One is true to an evolution when he accepts it in the highest stage that it has yet reached. It is perfectly clear that Jesus wanted men to have the best there is, and if there is ever to be anything better than Christian faith in the heavenly Father he will surely want men to have it and will do what he can to guide them into it.

So far as we can now see there can never be anything better for any personal being than to love God and all other beings. So the objective held up in the teachings of Jesus, it would seem, cannot be outgrown. There may be great advances made in strengthening the heart of love, extending its scope and increasing the efficiency of its expression, but there is nothing better conceivable than love. Love in this connection means the warm, active desire to see a person become all his nature indicates that

he ought to be, and so necessarily to see a society of individuals realize all its latent possibilities of healthful growth.

(8) "Anyway it is not necessary to join the church": Suppose that a man has begun the wonderful Christian way of living. He is reaching out with the energy of faith to work together with the will of God under the leadership of Jesus Christ for an honest and friendly world; he is winning one of the great prizes of life, the growing conviction of immortality. Why should he not join some Christian church?

The reason for doing so is found in the function of the Christian church. *The church is the only organization in the world whose function it is to recruit, train, and continually inspire men, women, and children to work with the will of God under the leadership of Jesus Christ for an honest and friendly world.*

It *recruits* men, women, and children for this great enterprise. Its members go everywhere laying friendly tactful hands on people, speaking to them about the meaning of life, speaking to them about the vision of life that shaped itself in the mind of Jesus Christ. On the Lord's Day the minister of the church speaks in public service about some of the many phases of his Lord's Great Enterprise. He creates an atmosphere in which it is not difficult for men and women to express the beginnings of interest in the Great Enterprise in which the scores, or hundreds, of Christians about them in the public service are supremely interested.

The church *trains its members* to take part in the Great Enterprise. The church building in a community is the headquarters of the friendly people. All the changing phases of the friendly Enterprise are brought up for study. The life of the community is faithfully surveyed. The

changes demanded by the application of the ideas of Jesus to community life are studied, and practical measures devised for making these changes. The successes of the Enterprise in other lands are studied, and under the influence of such study one and another go out from the church to spend their lives in distant parts of the world. People are trained to see the difference between a Christian lawyer, doctor, teacher, farmer, business man, and the non-Christian man in any of these occupations.

The church *continually inspires* its members to keep on in the Christian way of living. It is a band of people who help each other live up to the high purpose that is to carry them out into the everlasting life. Men and women out of the thick of life come to the church on the Lord's Day tired and discouraged and get something that sends them back to their work with new courage and resolution. Here is generated and sustained the spirit that founds hospitals and colleges, humanizes prisons, operates social settlements and directs the development of society. It is the power house of the civilization of friendly workmen. A large proportion of the best brains and heart of the community are in the church. When men in public worship sing the great hymns of the church together, unite with an earnest, broad-minded, large-hearted leader in common prayer, listen together to the reading of the Bible and to preaching about the great truths of life, their highest purposes are strengthened. Something is gained by doing these things together that cannot be gained when each man does them by himself. A college or high-school student does well to think alone sometimes about the meaning of his school life in all its phases. But such individual meditation does not take the place of the experience that is gained by being one of a great crowd at the convocation, at the football game, the rally before



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the game and the celebration afterward. There is need of uniting with other men in a democratic lifting up of hearts together before God in public worship.

In the church's Bible school the long history of God's will unfolding in human experience is studied, and life grows stronger and deeper. The book born out of life touched by the Spirit of God pours its message into the lives of those who study it. It is the Book of Life. The Bible school is rapidly broadening its scope so as to include a variety of courses in a system of religious education.

How can a person who has committed his whole life to the Great Enterprise which the church is organized to carry on keep out of the church? There is no other organization devoted to this great purpose. Where else should he go than to those like-minded with himself? There may be so-called "churches" that have not caught the spirit of the Great Enterprise. But there are very few in which are not to be found some persons who have. Certainly one would not stay out of the church except as a result of the conviction that the church had become hostile or indifferent to the Great Enterprise it had been organized to promote. It is conceivable that a particular church might miss Christ's central objective and make requirements for admission which a conscientious man could not meet. In that case he could not join this church and could only comfort himself by recognizing that the life of God is not confined to the church.

## Chapter XI

# CHOOSING THE GREAT ADVENTURE

We live our lives in the midst of certain mysterious facts from which we cannot escape, and which challenge all men to a great adventure.

### *The mysterious facts of life*

The first of the mysterious facts of life is a *man himself*. He is a form of energy strangely capable of making certain great assertions: "I am"; "I was"; "I know"; "I can"; "I ought"; "I will"; "I feel pain and cry"; "I feel happy and laugh"; "I want food"; "I want to do something"; "I want not to be alone,—I want a sex mate, and others with whom to laugh, and cry, and work." This mysterious being also feels a wonderful capacity for *becoming*.

This wanting, working, crying, laughing being finds himself in the midst of the *mystery of time*, of which he can conceive neither beginning nor ending. He finds himself in the midst of the *mystery of space*, limitless in every direction. There is the mystery of *ceaseless motion* all about him. The blood races through his veins, the stars fly through space, and the electrons never cease their orderly movement in the atom. The mysterious *stream of human life* flows on. Hour after hour, age after age, beings like himself appear in birth and disappear in death. There is the mystery of *universal becoming*. Everything that man sees about him is becoming more or less. He has discovered the evolutionary process and now feels himself

to be living in a vast universe which in all its parts is in process of becoming.

Finally there is the growing sense of the mysterious *one energy* in all things. In all the evolution of the earth and its life there has been a unifying upward trend that has issued in man and mankind's prospective unity and control of the earth.

All these mysterious facts make a man feel sure that some big thing is going on and that the big thing concerns him. It involves him and all men in a relation from which he cannot break away and in which he must act.

### *Life a great adventure*

Life, therefore, in all of its aspects is a great adventure. For this reason men love to live. So soon as all element of adventure disappears from an enterprise men lose interest in it. A business enterprise the profits of which are a dead certainty regardless of the skill of its managers ceases to be interesting. A friendship which is certain to persist and which has revealed to the full all of its possibilities becomes monotonous. The fact that it is certain never to be any more than it is at present deprives it of its attractiveness. A science which has no more problems to present, in which everything possible has been discovered, no longer draws students.

This which is true in business, in love, and in science is also true in religion. The unabating power of religion over the souls of men lies in the challenging adventure that it presents. The Christian religion appeals to men's desire to run a risk, to take a chance, to join in a great adventure. Donald Hankey has told us that becoming a Christian is betting your life there is a God. Jesus Christ is an unseen leader. His great vision of an honest and friendly world must be worked out in ways that no man

has yet been able fully to foresee. It unfolds step by step through experiment and experience. We do not present to men a final set of dogmas, expecting to be satisfied if they give a more or less intelligent intellectual assent to them. We present a way of living in which one looks out to God the heavenly Father in frequent prayer, in which one wishes to join all other men in using all resources for the common good, in which one looks out for spiritual leadership to Him who saw the vision of the life of man as it ought to be, and in which every new experience strengthens the conviction that the life is too good and strong ever to give out. The Christian is a great adventurer, following an adventuring Christ leading on in the forward movement of the vast adventuring will of God.

### *Choosing the great adventure*

A man must show himself a true man by choosing to enter the great adventure. The drifter, the morally lax, the man in whom spirit sinks down into flesh, does not get on well in the midst of the mysterious facts of life. A man must gird himself tightly and move out boldly after Christ. He must take up his life resolutely and put it decisively into Christ's enterprise, to be and to do all that an unfolding sense of duty may reveal. Then all the mysterious facts with which he is linked contribute to the strengthening of his life. He takes his place with God and good men in carrying life forward and begins to experience those profound satisfactions that can come only when life is being carried forward decisively.

The great adventure with the will of God never seemed more inviting than it does today. Upheaving forces are felt underneath all the life of the world. Great loves and hates are kindling, whole layers of society that have seemed stolid are beginning to stir with the consciousness of

wanting more life. It is the time to preach the Gospel of God in terms that people on the street can understand. It is time to infuse into the lay membership of the church an enthusiasm for communicating the wonderful way of living. If the Christian way of living is to spread widely and rapidly the minister must take his lay members into close partnership with himself in this most vital part of his work. Christian men and women everywhere in business and social life must find out how to make those whom they meet every day feel the power of the life that beats within them. They must know how to share it with others and so be true to its inmost spirit.

> "Needs must there be one way, our chief
> Best way of worship; let me strive
> To find it, and when found, contrive
> My fellows also take their share;
> This constitutes my earthly care.
> God's is above it and distinct,
> For I a man with men am linked
> And not a brute with brutes; no gain
> That I experience must remain
> Unshared."